

**Sidekick humour in animated  
Disney films: the case of *Mulan* and  
*Frozen*. A semantic, pragmatic, and  
multimodal analysis**

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## **Abstract**

Humour studies involve cognition, semantics, pragmatics, and, recently, multimodality. Also recent is their application on animation. This paper reports on the humour shown in Disney films *Frozen* (2013) and *Mulan* (1998) by their two sidekicks (the protagonists' loyal companions). The research answers four questions on the main function of the sidekicks' humour, its attainment through language, the role that multimodality (prosody, gestures, and image) plays in it, and last, the possible existence of a pattern between the sidekicks' humour-building strategies. The corpus was analysed with multimodal annotation program ELAN while following three humour theories: release from dramatism in a scene, superiority or aggression over a target, and incongruity, where the clash between prototypical meaning and meaning in context is highlighted. The results show that, despite differences in the use of superiority humour, both sidekicks use humour as release to break up dramatism, and also as incongruity, that is, as clashing utterance meanings: the prototypical one and the one in context. Thus, extralinguistic information is often crucial in interpreting humour. As for multimodality, although interwoven with language, it can sometimes be the sole humorous element. In all, the paper concludes that both multimodality and language cooperate in the building of a humorous identity for each sidekick.

**Key words:** humour studies, Disney, prototypicality, multimodality, sidekicks

## Resum

Els estudis d'humor abracen la cognició, semàntica, pragmàtica i, recentment, la multimodalitat. Darrerament ha augmentat la seva aplicació en cinema, especialment d'animació. Aquest treball analitza l'humor utilitzat a dues pel·lícules de Disney, *Frozen* (2013) i *Mulan* (1998), pel personatge que acompanya cada protagonista en les seves aventures (*sidekick*). Per fer-ho, es responen quatre preguntes sobre les funcions de l'humor, la seva construcció lingüística, el paper de la multimodalitat (prosòdia, gestualitat i imatge) i la possible existència d'un model d'humor de *sidekick*. El corpus s'ha analitzat amb el programa d'anotació multimodal ELAN aplicant tres teories d'humor: l'alliberament (o trencament) del dramatisme, la superioritat (o agressió) respecte d'un receptor i, per últim, la incongruïtat, en què s'estudia el contrast entre el significat prototípic d'un enunciat i el real, en context. Els resultats mostren que, malgrat diferències en l'humor d'agressió, ambdós *sidekicks* utilitzen l'humor d'alliberament per trencar el dramatisme de l'escena i, principalment, el d'incongruïtat, és a dir, el xoc entre significats: el prototípic i l'adequat al context. Consegüentment, la informació extralingüística demostra ser clau per interpretar l'humor. Quant a la multimodalitat, actua conjuntament amb el llenguatge verbal, però a vegades és l'únic component humorístic. Finalment, es conclou que multimodalitat i llengua actuen conjuntament per crear la identitat humorística de cada personatge.

**Paraules clau:** estudis d'humor, Disney, prototipicalitat, multimodalitat, *sidekicks*

## Resumen

Los estudios de humor abarcan la cognición, semántica, pragmática y, recientemente, multimodalidad. Últimamente ha aumentado su interés en cine, específicamente de animación. Este proyecto estudia el humor usado en dos películas Disney, *Frozen* (2013) y *Mulan* (1998), por el compañero de aventuras de cada protagonista (*sidekick*). Para ello se responden cuatro preguntas sobre las funciones del humor, su construcción lingüística, el papel de la multimodalidad (prosodia, gestualidad e imagen) y las semejanzas entre ambos personajes. El corpus se ha analizado con el programa de anotación multimodal ELAN aplicando tres teorías de humor: liberación de tensión o dramatismo, superioridad (o agresión) sobre un receptor, e incongruencia, donde se observa el contraste entre el significado prototípico de un enunciado y el significado en contexto. Los resultados muestran que, aunque hay diferencias en el humor de superioridad, ambos *sidekicks* usan el humor como liberación de la tensión de la escena y, principalmente, como incongruencia, es decir, como choque entre significados: el prototípico y el adecuado al contexto. Consecuentemente, la información extralingüística demuestra ser clave para interpretar el humor. En cuanto a la multimodalidad, aunque actúa junto al lenguaje verbal, en ocasiones es el único componente humorístico. Finalmente se concluye que multimodalidad y lengua actúan juntas para crear la identidad humorística de cada personaje.

**Palabras clave:** estudios de humor, Disney, prototipicalidad, multimodalidad, *sidekick*

*Making fun is serious business.*

–Charlie Chaplin

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Thanks to my university studies, I have discovered the extensive role that language and multimodality play in discourse. As my knowledge grew, I found myself wondering about specific communicative scenarios, such as humour. What does “funny” entail? How can we make statements about the “funniness” of certain utterances over others? Do they form patterns? After studying language through pragmatics, semantics, or prosody, I realised that a link could be established between them when used in a multimodal discourse analysis applied to this specific communicative situation.

To study these phenomena, I decided to find discourse purposefully created as humorous. Disney animated films came to mind. Specifically, I decided to focus my research on characters with similar roles: secondary characters known as sidekicks (whom I always find very engaging). I have always been interested in Disney animation. As an adult, I am aware of the importance of these films because of the cognitive and identity-developing impact that they can have. Thus, this paper provided a good opportunity to merge my academic interest in humorous language and my personal interest in animation.

First, we will cover the theory on humour studies, starting with a general overview on its cognitive perspective to then move on to multimodality in humour. Afterwards, there will be a section dedicated to the two analysis that, in the end, will be discussed and compared. Let us start, thus, presenting a background on humour studies and sidekicks.



## 2. THEORY

Humour studies –the study of humour through linguistics– came to be during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and took after millennia of interdisciplinary studies dedicated to humour. In 1985, Victor Raskin presented a study of humour through semantics that would set off a wide response in the form of new research and extensions to his own<sup>1</sup>. Afterwards, multimodality came into play and started being studied in humour development<sup>2</sup>. However, although the semiotics and multimodality of humour have been studied in recent phenomena (like memes), linguistic studies on film humour have not been as thoroughly undertaken. Thus, my aim is to bring new knowledge into this field: language and multimodality in the building of a humorous sidekick in animated films.

### 2.1. What is humour? A cognitive linguistics perspective

To understand what humour is and how it is built –and perceived– through language, one must refer to cognitive linguistics. There are two main cognitive linguistics humour theories. Both share a common underlying trait that constitutes the key element in humour: the overlapping or simultaneous forth calling of different mental spaces. In the first of the two theories, by Fauconnier (1984/1994), mental spaces were introduced. This developed the idea that there is a link between different mental spaces (domains) that are developed through our knowledge of the world and the communicative context. This link enables us to establish connections between related objects, concepts, situations... Similarly, the next theory, developed by Coulson (2005), describes humour as “the ability to understand mappings between normative and non-normative scenarios”, that is, taking from our knowledge of language and the world, we add new interpretations provided by the context to our base space (Tabacaru, Lemmens, 2014). The clash between the base mental space and the one that the context calls forth (plus our linguistic knowledge) is what we refer to as humour.

### 2.2. Pragmatics of humour: non-bona-fide communication

Pragmatics is the analysis of extralinguistic information to better understand an utterance (Escandell, 2013). Furthermore, according to the Speech Act Theory developed by Austin (1962) and Searle (1969), communicative scenarios are composed of three speech acts: locutionary (what is said), illocutionary (the speaker’s intention) and perlocutionary (the effect, intended or not, of the utterance). Paul Grice (1969) further developed the configuration of communicative acts by presenting four

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<sup>1</sup> See Abdalian (2005); Krikmann (2006); Raskin, Attardo (1995)

<sup>2</sup> See Mifdal (2019); Tabacaru, Lemmens (2014); Dynel (2013)

maxims whose fulfilment is expected by interlocutors, that is, communication is an interaction between participants who follow a tacit understanding of collaboration. This conforms the Principle of Cooperation. Thus, participants expect their counterparts to be truthful (maxim of quality), relevant to the conversation (maxim of relevance), complete (maxim of quantity) and organised (maxim of manner). When all maxims are followed, *bona-fide* communication takes place. Cases where the Principle of Cooperation is not followed are considered *non-bona-fide* communication. Humour is widely considered as such (Goatly, 2012; Raskin, 1985).

Humorous utterances are described as those “whose perlocutionary goal is to amuse its audience” (Attardo and Chabanne, 1992 in Attardo, 2020: 158). Thus, humorous utterances can be shaped in any way so long as the perlocutionary goal (mirth) is attained. Hence the cases where maxims within the cooperative principle are violated. These violations are deliberate and are intended to be perceived as such. In these situations, the hearer “can work out another intended meaning which can be inferred from the context of the communicative exchange” (Attardo, 2020: 161).

In 1995, Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory presented the idea that, of all the maxims, relevance is at the helm of communication. Thus, in most cases, it is the violation of the maxim of relevance that guides the interpretation of the humour, which is directly related to its “appropriateness” to the communicative situation and to our mental spaces. In humour, this appropriateness is often expressed through implicature. This implicit meaning might be easier to unveil depending on its level of salience, that is, its “accessibility and processing costs” (Verschueren, 2017). The most salient information is the easiest to access. Thus, the underlying appropriateness of a humorous utterance is often detected through our knowledge of both language and the world and the clash between a more salient meaning and the one that the utterance has in context. Extralinguistic information is, therefore, often crucial in humour (Yus, 2021).

Furthermore, what distinguishes humour from other types of *non-bona-fide* communication is intentionality: one of the participants is always aware that the principle of cooperation is being violated. In fiction, much like our corpus, one must keep in mind that although the speakers themselves might not intend to be humorous, their creators do. Thus, although the humour might not be intended inter-character-wise, it is nonetheless perceived as humorous by the audience (Dynel, 2013).

### **2.3. Main linguistic humour theories**

Throughout the years, three main humour theories have been developed: the release theory, the superiority theory, and the incongruity theory. In cases like ours (fiction), different theories can be applied simultaneously.

#### *2.3.1. Release Theory*

One of the most prominent approaches to humour as release is Freud's. In his research, Freud presented humour as a certain "liberation" or release from the set rules of language (Attardo, 2020). This relates directly to the earlier comments on humour as *non-bona-fide*, because it allows us to break the Principle of Cooperation in a "valid" manner and offers the chance to use language under a different set of mechanisms (for example, using prototypically figurative expressions literally).

Another way in which humour acts as release is through its role as an escape from the seriousness of life (Attardo, 2020). This is often identified as "humour as play". Bateson (1976) said that on such occasions, humorous utterances carry a metamessage coded and interpreted as "this is play". Humour is, thus, release, be it from the rules of language and communication or from the seriousness of life. Therefore, in this paper, humour used to break up the tension (seriousness) in a scene will be categorised as release.

#### *2.3.2. Superiority Theory*

Superiority humour (also called humour as aggression), is one of the oldest and most extended theories. It is rooted on the diminishing of one of the parties, known as the target. Here, humour arises from the satisfaction felt from an enemy's discomfort or defeat (Attardo, 2020). Following Attardo's distribution of humour theories (1994, in Attardo, 2020), superiority humour is related to social studies, since concepts like "power", "winning" and "losing" are closely dependant on the social constructs and pragmatic environment in which the participants have developed their linguistic abilities. Thus, superiority humour is found when a hierarchy is used to determine a status of the participants.

#### *2.3.3. Incongruity Theory*

Lastly, we will develop the idea of humour as incongruity, perhaps the most widely researched theory. In this sense, humour is conceptualised as a divergence from the hearer's communicative expectations (Forabosco, 1992). This establishes a direct link

to the cognitive approach to humour, where the utterance presents a clash or overlap of scripts (domains): the first interpretation of the utterance (most accessible, more salient) is rejected in favour of a second interpretation, appropriate to the context. Therefore, incongruity is most directly linked with the overlap of scripts or schemas: “incongruity refers to a stimulus feature that does not match the abstracted value of that feature in the schema” (Deckers, Winters, 1986: 57). The identification of the second domain serves as a resolution to the incongruity. Naturally, these overlapping domains are coexisting, there is a relation between the two that allows the hearer to travel from one to the other and detect the humorous nature of the utterance. Furthermore, when more than two scripts overlap, there may be a different placement of the incongruities: one might be foregrounded, the other backgrounded.

Thus, incongruity stems from the unexpected: a contrast between what X is supposed to mean (based on saliency) and what X really means. In the same manner, incongruity is, essentially, surprise; or, rather, as Attardo (2020) said, surprise comes from incongruity.

#### **2.4. Semiotics of humour**

In Ancient Rome, Cicero distinguished between humour *de re* and *de dicto* (Attardo, 2017). The former consists of a humorous utterance that does not rely on its form to be perceived as humorous, whilst the latter is humorous because of its linguistic sign. This parallels the current approach to humour, where one can distinguish referential humour (based on the signified) from verbal humour (based on the signifier). This accounts for the fact that humour might not only draw its attributes from the language itself, but also from pragmatics, as we have stated. One last comment should be made: verbal humour is not equal to verbalised humour. The latter is opposed to cases such as non-verbalised humour, which is not expressed through spoken language.

##### *2.4.1. The General Theory of Verbal Humour*

In 1985, Victor Raskin developed the Semantic Script Theory of Humour to identify semantic mechanisms used in humour. Later, Attardo and Raskin himself further developed it to create the General Theory of Verbal Humour (GTVH) (Attardo, Raskin, 1991). The GTVH accounts for creativity in humour (especially in fiction-writing) and its “colourful language” (Dyner, 2013). It helps distinguish verbal and referential humour and to establish common traits among humorous utterances. It proposes eight knowledge resources: script opposition, logical mechanism, situation, target, narrative strategy, and language. Script opposition consists in the identification of the

overlapping domains. Raskin (1985) distinguished three main types of script oppositeness (from the “real” vs. “unreal” contrast): actual vs. non-actual, expected vs. unexpected and possible vs. fully/partially impossible. As seen earlier, one must remember that script opposition can transcend language and reach pragmatics. In this case, scripts can also be considered “frames”: “a data structure used to represent commonly encountered, stereotyped situations” (Minsky, 1975 in Mifdal, 2019). Thus, humour can also stem from a break or shift in frames.

The object of this paper is not to make a deep language analysis of the humorous utterances in the corpus, but rather to identify, understand and compare their use in two particular sidekicks. Thus, the GTVH will not be explicitly used in the analysis, but some of its items will be considered to better comprehend the structure of the humour and decide more easily the role of multimodality in it. Therefore, we will observe information on script opposition, situation, language, and target (only in cases of superiority humour).

#### *2.4.2. Multimodality in humour*

Humour can also be studied through multimodal discourse analysis. From this perspective, humour can be marked by certain universals, such as gestures or prosodic features: volume, change in pitch, or even laughter (Guidi, 2017). For length and clarity purposes, in this paper prosody, gestures, and image will all be considered together in multimodality.

Through the years, laughter has become its own prosodic phenomenon, and its use in humour is still debated among researchers (some see it as a specific type of humour). What most research studies *have* concluded, however, is that laughter in humour carries a metamessage that the participants interpret as “this is funny” (Gironzetti, 2017). As for gestures, they mostly can be emblematic (carrying a fixed meaning), iconic (resembling a physical aspect of the information given), metaphoric (resembling abstract content), deictic (pointing out special locations) or beat gestures (in tune with the rhythm of speech and with no representative functions) (McNeill, 1992). Furthermore, because our corpus is made of films, we will also observe the entire image in which the humour takes place. This may provide information like the placement of characters in a shot.

#### *2.4.3. Prototype theories in humour*

One of the ways in which humour can be explored is through the prototype theory (Chen, Jiang, 2018), which can be applied to linguistic areas such as phonology, semantics, and syntax. It accounts for a play on a prototype in language. An example of this could be, as we commented, using a prototypical syntactic structure in an unexpected way (changing one word in a collocation) or, semantically, introducing polysemy or ambiguity to words otherwise monosemic. Similarly, the contrast between prototypicality and non-prototypicality can trigger humour because it arises from an incongruity between what is expected and what truly takes place. Therefore, prototypicality is tied to saliency: the easiest accessible element is the prototype of its category.

Beyond semantic or syntactic prototypicality, the prototype theory can build humour through multimodality by highlighting prototypicality vs. non-prototypicality. In these cases, the object of the humour is presented as a category member that defies many, if not all, prototypical features associated with it. Another way in which this can be accomplished is through the play on family resemblance: heightening similarities between members that would otherwise be considered different (thus related to incongruity). A third way to build humour with the prototype theory is through the fuzziness of boundaries between categories. Here, the elements are “peripheral” members of said categories: they “possess features of both and are [...] hard to categorise exactly” (Chen, Jiang, 2018).

#### *2.4.4. Taxonomy of humorous intermodality*

Depending on each case, multimodality can play a bigger or smaller role in the humour development. This can be easily identifiable in some cases but can also prove tricky when modalities are very tightly interwoven, such as in film. To establish the role of multimodality in humour, Zhang (2009, in Chen, Jiang, 2018) presents a distinction between complementary and non-complementary intermodal relationships, which we will use in our study. In non-complementary intermodality, the modalities coexist but one of them serves as no contribution to the expression of humour. In complementary relationships, however, intermodality plays an important role: all modalities play from each other. The degree in which they are used presents a secondary distinction within complementary intermodality: reinforcement (one modality has the main role) and non-reinforcement (equal status between modalities). In this paper, although the distinction between the last two sub-types might be fuzzy, what is important is mainly observing uses of complementary and non-complementary intermodality.

## 2.5. Sidekicks: Walt Disney Animation Studios

We will proceed with a brief comment on sidekicks. A sidekick is a “named character in a text, a character with substance and, most importantly, some significant relationship to the protagonist” (Gruner, 2020). Examples of sidekicks in universal literature are Watson, from Doyle’s *Sherlock Holmes* (1887), Sancho Panza, from Cervantes’ *Don Quixote* (1605), or Friday, from Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719).

Sidekicks also appear in the seventh art, such as Donkey, from *Shrek*, or Chewbacca, from *Star Wars*. In our case, Walt Disney Animation Studios (within the Walt Disney Company founded in 1923), provide more examples of sidekicks. In these films, sidekicks are the loyal companions to the protagonist, whom they help to reach their goals. These secondary characters are often sentient and usually have non-human forms, like Sebastian, a crab in *The Little Mermaid*, or Timon and Pumbaa, a meerkat and warthog duo in *The Lion King*. Furthermore, in some cases they do not speak and base their entire performance on gestures, such as Pascal, a chameleon in *Tangled*, or Meeko, a raccoon in *Pocahontas*. There can also be sidekicks to the villains, such as Iago, Jafar’s parrot in *Aladdin* or LeFou, Gaston’s companion in *Beauty and the Beast*.

Let us now introduce the methodology followed in this paper, where we will also present the research questions that this study aims to provide answers for.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research aims and questions

This research paper presents the desire to widen the scope of humour studies. In hopes of doing so, my aim is to answer the following research questions:

- (i) How is humour attained linguistically in the films' sidekicks?
- (ii) What is the role of multimodality in their humour-building?
- (iii) Is sidekick-humour mostly used in tense moments to break up dramatism or are other types of humour used?
- (iv) Are there patterns between the two characters' humour-building (a "sidekick humour formula")?

#### 3.2. Corpus and instruments

Because the object of study is humorous language in sidekicks from Walt Disney animated films, I chose to analyse speaking sidekicks to better study the balance (or lack-there-of) between modalities. Considering the length and timeline of this paper, I focus on two Disney sidekicks: *Mulan's* Mushu (1998), and *Frozen's* Olaf (2013). The choice of films for the corpus was also made after observing popular opinions shared on internet surveys<sup>3</sup>, which placed both sidekicks amongst Disney's funniest.

To analyse the data, verbatim transcriptions will be made of the scenes where humour is detected (multiple humorous instances might occur in one scene). These transcriptions will also include information on prosody<sup>4</sup> and gestures. To organise this, ELAN will be used as a multimodal annotation program.

Thus, applying everything presented in the theoretical background on saliency and the prototype theory, and using both Zhang's taxonomy of intermodality (2009 in Chen, Jiang; 2018) and aspects of the GTVH (Attardo, Raskin; 1991), let us proceed with the analysis of the data to identify, describe, and compare the traits of Disney sidekick humour.

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<sup>3</sup>IMBd (2021) *Poll: Favorite Disney Sidekick*. Wilson, P. (2018) *Top 10 Best Disney Animated Sidekicks*.

<sup>4</sup>The sidekicks have American English accents; thus, the transcriptions are made following American English spelling.



## 4. DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1. *Mulan* (1998)

The first film that we will analyse is *Mulan*, which premiered in 1998. During China's war against the Huns, the Chinese government decides to call all males of every family to enlist. Mulan, the only daughter of the Fa family, disguises herself as a man to take his crippled father's place in the army. To succeed, Mulan's family ancestors decide to send her the aid of their most powerful protector, the Great Stone Dragon. While trying to wake him up, Mushu, a demoted dragon protector of the Fa family, accidentally destroys the statue of the Great Stone Dragon. To avoid the ancestors' wrath, he decides to help Mulan himself. This way he also tries to get back in their good graces after failing in a previous mission with another of Mulan's ancestors, who ended up beheaded. He meets a cricket, who will become somewhat of a sidekick to the sidekick, and together they will help Mulan to succeed in her disguising as a man. Mulan slowly finds her place in the army and even helps to stop the Huns by provoking an avalanche to wipe a battalion that charges them. After this attack, Mulan is wounded, and her identity is discovered. The general of her battalion, Li Shang, leaves her behind. Mulan, however, travels onward to the emperor's palace and ends up saving China from the Huns.

#### 4.1.1. *Sidekick contextualisation: Mushu*

Mushu is Mulan's sidekick in the film, and first appears in minute 20:50. Mushu is a lizard-looking dragon, protector of the family, whose initial intentions of helping Mulan are not selfless and present him as a cunning character.

Before moving onto the analysis of Mushu's humour, let us comment on a backgrounded incongruity in the character itself that presents it, from the very beginning, as humorous. Mushu is introduced as a dragon, yet multimodality highlights a very clear incongruity between DRAGON vs. MUSHU (expected vs. unexpected). Applying the prototype theory, Mushu does not seem to fit the main traits associated to a prototype member of the DRAGON category, mainly because of his size and lizard-like appearance. Thus, multimodality already presents an incongruity through the opposition between prototypicality vs. non-prototypicality. This underlying humorous incongruity in the character is heightened by Mushu's frequent prosodic features: a high volume, rather deep tone and sometimes even the use of a growl while speaking. This highlights the inherent incongruity of his non-prototypicality: big voice for a small body. Thus, the character itself is presented as inherently humorous.

#### 4.1.2. Humour Types

##### a) Superiority Humour

Mushu's use of superiority humour is very prominent. On some occasions, he is the target himself. Although these are mostly cases of humour performed by other characters, they enhance the perception of Mushu as "funny". However, the most frequent target in Mushu's humour as aggression is the cricket, a character that, unlike Mushu, does not speak. His interactions with this character are almost always a case of superiority humour (sometimes mixed with incongruity or release). This superiority is shown both through cases of complementary intermodality and cases where only multimodality plays a role (verbal language is foregone in the humour-building), like in Example 2. The following scenes show this superiority humour aimed at the cricket, who is repeatedly demoted by Mushu to a secondary role, almost that of an assistant. This role reversal (CRICKET vs. ASSISTANT) will play out throughout the entire film in most dialogues between the two characters and is attained by setting social distance between them, thus establishing a hierarchy where Mushu has a higher status. This is specifically achieved using imperatives directed at the target (such as in 1.1-1.2., 1.8).

Example 1) [from "Mushu Transcript 2: Meeting Mulan"]

- 1.1. MUSHU: Dishonor! Dishonor on your whole family. [To the cricket] Make
- 1.2. a note of this. Dishonor on you. Dishonor on your cow... Dis- [MULAN
- 1.3. covers his mouth with her hands]
- 1.4. MULAN: Stop. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm just nervous, I've never done this
- 1.5. before.
- 1.6. MUSHU: Then you're gonna have to trust me. And don't you slap me no
- 1.7. more. We clear on that? All right. Okey-dokey. Let's get this show on the
- 1.8. road! [To the cricket] Cri-Kee, get the bags.

[28:44-29:09]

Example 2) [from "Mushu Transcript 2: Meeting Mulan"]



Still 1 [27:36]

Still 2 [27:37]

Still 3 [27:38]

Another prominent way in which Mushu uses humour as aggression is through sarcasm, a case of irony that can be used to belittle the target. Irony consists in saying

something and meaning something else, which is an intended violation of Grice's Principle of Cooperation. Although it appears often in incongruity, here it is used also as superiority humour. Let us see it in an example:

Example 3)<sup>5</sup> [from "Mushu Transcript 7: This is the army!"]

- 1.9. MUSHU: [Stares at a picture while the cricket writes a forgery of a war  
1.10. message from the General.] Okay, let me see what you got. [Reads  
1.11. letter] "From General Li. Dear son, we're waiting for Huns at the pass. It  
1.12. would mean a lot if you'd come and back us up." [He looks up and  
1.13. smiles] That's great, [he leans into the cricket] except you forgot,  
1.14. (changes his voice tone) 'And since we're out of potpourri, perhaps you  
1.15. wouldn't mind bringing up some.' [Slams a hand on the table and leans  
1.16. into the cricket] (Screaming back in his regular voice) Hello! This is the  
1.17. army! Make it sound more urgent, please!

[46:08-46:51]

Here Mushu makes suggestions to the cricket by imitating his writing style: hedging (1.14-1.15), which is seen in constructions like "perhaps" and "wouldn't mind". While speaking, he also changes his tone and adds beat gestures to convey the metamessage "this is imitation". With this, and then his comment in 1.16-1.17 going back to his regular voice and slamming his hand on the table, the audience sees that he was in fact being sarcastic. Here, one could say that Mushu violates the maxim of quality: he says something while meaning something else, yet resolves the sarcasm himself (1.16-1.17), implying that the cricket's words are too polite for the context in which they are: war.

Furthermore, another repeated case of superiority humour is aimed at men as a collective through generalisations of their behaviour, such as in the following example:

Example 4) [from "Mushu Transcript 3: Act like a man"]

- 1.18. [MULAN and MUSHU reach a series of tents. There is a man picking on  
1.19. his nose, one clipping his toenails with chopsticks...]  
1.20. MUSHU: Beautiful, isn't it?  
1.21. MULAN: They're disgusting.

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<sup>5</sup> Before this, MUSHU overhears CHI FU telling General LI SHANG that his soldiers are not ready for war and intends to keep them away from battle. MUSHU and the cricket sneak into CHI FU's tent after he leaves.

- 1.22. MUSHU: No, they're men. Now, you're gonna have to act just like them,  
1.23. so, pay attention.

[29:26-29:33]

Here, Mushu repeats Mulan's words and changes "disgusting" to "men" (1.22). With this he creates a semantic prototype of MAN that entails adjectives like "disgusting" and those related to the visual input (men biting their toenails and picking their noses). Here, thus, the prototype theory is used semantically by adding information to the conceptualisation of the prototypical member of this category. Therefore, there are many cases of superiority humour in Mushu's performance.

### **b) Incongruity Humour**

Incongruity is Mushu's most frequent humour. A repeated strategy is the clash of frames through pragmatics: a salient context or participant clashes with the context in which the utterance takes place. This might include a role reversal. Let us see this in some examples.

Example 5) [from "Mushu Transcript 1: Meeting Mushu"]

- 1.24. MUSHU: [To the statue of the Great Stone Dragon] Yo, Rocky, wake up!  
1.25. Ya gotta go fetch Mulan! [Throws kisses at him] Come on, boy! Go get  
1.26. her! Go on! [Throws gong mallet, pats his lap, throws more kisses and  
1.27. whistles].

[23:18-23:30]

In this scene, Mushu tries to wake up the Great Stone Dragon from his statue. He uses expressions such as "go fetch" (1.25), deictic gestures like throwing the gong mallet (1.26), emblematic gestures like patting his lap and even whistles. This communicative behaviour is prototypical of a specific frame: "playing fetch". This is the most salient context for these expressions and, thus, a clash of scripts STATUE vs. DOG is presented: the audience perceives Mushu's language as that directed to a pet<sup>6</sup>.

Another repeated case of clash of frames and scripts is role reversal. This takes place, for example, when Mushu adopts the role of a parent, creating an overlap between the scripts MUSHU vs. PARENT (example 6). He uses the syntactic prototype theory and slightly modifies the fixed expression "first day of school" to "first day of training" (1.29).

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<sup>6</sup> Similar cases have been detected in other scenes (for example, when Mushu also treats Mulan's horse as a pet dog saying "Down, Bessie" while pointing downwards and, thus, creating an opposition between HORSE vs. DOG).

He also uses imperatives such as “don’t talk with your mouth full” (1.33) to create hierarchical distance with Mulan and place himself in the “higher” role of “parent”. There is another clash, one between WAR vs. SCHOOL. He uses the semantic prototype theory in his expressions “listen to your teacher” and “play nice with the other kids” (1.29-1.30), because, knowing the context in which they are, “teacher” and “kids” are polysemic and refer to the war generals and fellow soldiers in her war camp, respectively. The clash takes place between the salient context in which these expressions are used (SCHOOL) and the actual context in which they appear (WAR).

Example 6) [from “Mushu Transcript 5: First day of training”]

- 1.28. MUSHU: No time to talk. [Feeds Mulan as he speaks] Now remember,  
1.29. it’s your first day of training, so listen to your teacher and no fightin’, play  
1.30. nice with the other kids, unless, of course, one of the other kids wanna  
1.31. fight, then you have to kick the other kid’s butt [smiles].  
1.32. MULAN: [With her mouth full] But I don’t wanna kick the other kid’s butt.  
1.33. MUSHU: [Frowns] Don’t talk with your mouth full.

[35:28-35:38]

As we saw in the presentation of the sidekick, another reiterated mechanism used to build incongruity humour is making use of multimodality to highlight non-prototypicality. An example takes place when Mushu meets Mulan. Here, the prototype theory is applied on Mulan’s horse.

Example 7) [from “Mushu Transcript 2: Meeting Mulan”]

- 1.34. MUSHU: Of course. I’m travel size for your convenience. If I was my real  
1.35. size, your cow here would die of fright. [Pats the horse. It tries to bite  
1.36. MUSHU. He frowns and points to the floor.] Down, Bessie. [To MULAN]  
1.37. My powers are beyond your mortal imagination. For instance, my eyes  
1.38. can see straight through your armor. [He opens his eyes wide and looks  
1.39. at MULAN’s chest. She slaps him] All right, that’s it! Dishonor! Dishonor  
1.40. on your whole family. [To the cricket] Make a note of this. Dishonor on  
1.41. you. Dishonor on your cow... Dis- [MULAN covers his mouth with her  
1.42. hands]  
1.43. MULAN: Stop. I’m sorry. I’m sorry. I’m just nervous, I’ve never done this  
1.44. before.  
1.45. MUSHU: Then you’re gonna have to trust me. And don’t you slap me no  
1.46. more. We clear on that? All right. Okey-dokey. Let’s get this show on the

1.47. road! [To the cricket] Cri-Kee, get the bags. [Claps] Let's move it, heifer.

[28:28-29:07]

Mushu's choice of words "cow" (1.35, 1.41) and "heifer" (1.47) create a clash of the scripts COW vs. HORSE<sup>7</sup> presenting a resemblance between members of different categories and, thus, creates a case of incongruity humour. The maxim of relevance is violated because Mushu's choice of words ("cow", "heifer") are apparently inappropriate. It could also be considered, however, as a violation of the maxim of quality. If we consider this so, we should also regard Mushu's choice of words as intentional: he is aware that the animal is a horse yet uses words "cow" and "heifer" regardless.

Example 7 can be used to present another frequent way in which incongruity humour is built through semantic ambiguity. In 1.37-1.38 Mushu makes the utterance "my eyes can see straight through your armor". That, plus a prolonged vowel [eɪ] in "straight" and his gaze placement (still 4), creates a humorous opposition between ARMOUR vs. BREASTS.

Example 8) [from "Mushu Transcript 2: Meeting Mulan"]



Still 4 (1.38) [28:42]

This play on the female anatomy is used again when Mulan is bathing alone in the lake –Mushu keeping watch– and suddenly three soldiers run into the water. Mushu says "There's a couple of things I know they are bound to notice". The context and participants bring up an ambiguity in "couple of things" through a clash between THINGS vs. BREASTS. Thus, semantic ambiguity is often achieved through pragmatic knowledge where, in most cases, image (multimodality) plays a big role.

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<sup>7</sup> Further into the film there are other similar instances, much like a clash between HORSE vs. SHEEP.

Besides semantic ambiguity and frame clashes, another recurrent incongruity mechanism (also linked to pragmatics) is reference to knowledge of the world. On several occasions, Mushu makes references to other films such as *Sleeping Beauty* (1959) or *Frankenstein* (1931) (example 9). In this last case, context, multimodality, and the knowledge of the world that the audience might have are key. A similarity could be found between Mushu's words ("I live") and gestures and those related to *Frankenstein* or even a zombie. Without this knowledge of the world, his utterance and gestures would not be humorous.

Example 9) [from "Mushu Transcript 1: Meeting Mushu"]<sup>8</sup>



Still 5: "I" [20:53]

Still 6: "live!" [20:54-20:55]

Still 7 [20:56]

The last element that we shall comment on is Mushu's intentionality. This is shown in his sarcasm (which can also be incongruity), but also in certain cases where he purposefully makes a joke. This can be seen in the following transcript:

Example 10) [from "Mushu Transcript 4: What's your name?"]

- 1.48. LI SHANG: What's your name? [MULAN stammers]
- 1.49. CHI FU: Your commanding officer just asked you a question.
- 1.50. MULAN: I've got a name. And it's a boy's name, too.
- 1.51. MUSHU: [Hiding from General LI SHANG on the back of MULAN's collar]
- 1.52. Ling, How 'bout Ling?
- 1.53. MULAN: [To MUSHU, nodding to LING at the back.] His name is Ling.
- 1.54. LI SHANG: I didn't ask for his name. I asked for yours!
- 1.55. MUSHU: Try, [puts his hands on his face] uh, uh, ah, Chu.
- 1.56. MULAN: Ah Chu.
- 1.57. LI SHANG: Ah Chu?
- 1.58. MUSHU: Gesundheit. [Laughs and wipes a fake tear from his eye with
- 1.59. MULAN's collar] I kill myself.

[33:30-33:54]

<sup>8</sup> Clash between MUSHU vs. FRANKENSTEIN

Mushu makes a joke through phonology in the utterances “ah” and “chu”<sup>9</sup>, which create homophony between a Chinese name and the onomatopoeia for sneezing. He resolves his joke by saying “Gesundheit” (1.58) and fake crying of laughter (1.58-1.59) to convey the metamessage “this is funny”, thus showcasing intentionality.

### c) Release Humour

Finally, there is release humour. There are many instances in which Mushu’s humour presents a break in the tension in the scene, such as the last example seen (10), where Li Shang is confronting Mulan in front of the other soldiers when Mushu makes a joke. Usually, this type of humour is mostly driven by a violation of the maxim of relevance. Much of this release humour takes place in one of the film’s most dramatic sequences, when Mulan’s battalion is attacked by the Huns in the mountains. There are multiple humorous instances throughout the sequence, some verbalised and others not. This can be seen in the following example:

Example 11) [from “Mushu Transcript 9: Battle against the Huns”]

- 1.60. GENERAL LI: Prepare to fight. If we die, we die with honor. [The
- 1.61. soldiers unsheathe their swords. The Huns charge against them.] Yao,
- 1.62. aim the cannon at Shan-Yu. [MULAN looks at the reflection of the
- 1.63. mountain on her sword. She knocks YAO down, grabs the cannon and
- 1.64. runs toward the Huns]
- 1.65. YAO: Hey!
- 1.66. GENERAL LI: Ping! Come back!
- 1.67. [MULAN stops and aims the cannon at the mountain. Shan-Yu
- 1.68. approaches]
- 1.69. MUSHU: All right. You might want to light that right about now. [MULAN
- 1.70. struggles to light the match] Quickly. Quickly! [MUSHU tugs her ear]
- 1.71. [A falcon knocks them down. MULAN looks for her match but uses
- 1.72. MUSHU instead to light the cannon and fires it at a mountain top.]
- 1.73. MUSHU: [In the air] (Screaming) You missed! How could you miss? He
- 1.74. was three feet in front of you!

[54:56-56:24]

In this transcript we see clear cases of verbalised release humour. First, something that the audience interprets as humorous comes, again, from their knowledge of the

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<sup>9</sup> This is also one of the few cases of verbal (not referential) humour.

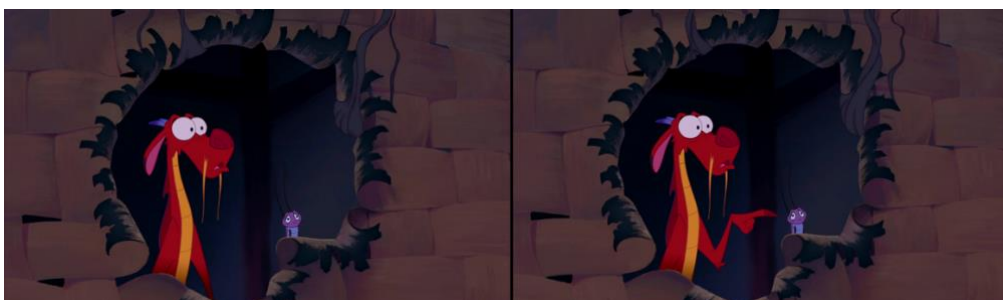


world: a tense situation such as this one usually calls for calm communication and encouragement instead of Mushu's behaviour (1.70). We could consider this a violation of either the maxim of relevance (Mulan is aware that she needs to fire the cannon, thus Mushu is pointing out the obvious in 1.69) or perhaps the maxim of manner, because first he indirectly rushes Mulan through hedging (1.69: "might") and then uses exclamations (1.70) to make his illocutionary act more direct: rush Mulan to avoid dying. Mulan then fires the last cannon, but instead of directing it to the leader of the Huns, she fires it at mountain. Mushu's utterances in (1.73-1.74) break up the tension built until then by, again, pointing out what is obvious: Mulan missed the expected target (Hun) and hits the apparently wrong one (mountain). Thus, release humour usually presents a violation of the maxim of relevance.

#### 4.1.3. Intermodality: prosody and gestures

Let us now discuss how Mushu's humour uses intermodality. In more than half of the cases analysed, intermodality was complementary. However, there are also several cases of non-complementary intermodality where only one modality creates the humour. This single modality is usually image (and gesture): non-verbalised humour. A clear case to illustrate this (besides example 2) takes place right before Mulan's encounter with the Huns (example 11). Her battalion is walking in silence, sulking through the mountains, when suddenly one of the cannons is fired from the cart that Mulan is pulling. The following images are the only input the audience gets, which becomes a case of both release and superiority humour:

Example 12) [from "Mushu Transcript 9: Battle against the Huns"]



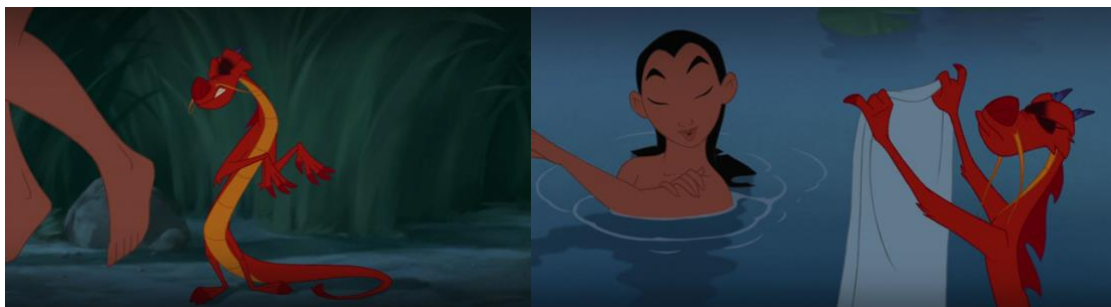
Still 8 [53:07]

Still 9 [53:09]

Mushu's facial expression –wide eyes and a slightly open mouth– showcases his awareness of his mistake (firing the cannon). But the humour stems from his gesture, both deictic (pointing to the cricket) and, in this context, also emblematic, because with this gesture he conveys a message that, through knowledge of the world, the audience

interprets as “it was his fault”<sup>10</sup>. Mushu being used as a lighter (example 11: 1.71-1.72) is another example of visual humour<sup>11</sup>. Thus, image and gestures play a big role in Mushu’s humour. Furthermore, there are other cases of purely visual humour where the prototype theory comes into play, such as when Mushu uses his ears (shaped as ovals) to cover his eyes and avoid seeing Mulan naked (example 13). This plays on another contrast between peripheral members: EARS vs. EYE MASK.

Example 13) [from “Mushu Transcript 6: Hygiene”]



*Still 10 [42:22]*

*Still 11 [42:33]*

Complementary intermodality (collaboration between all modalities) is, however, the most used type of intermodality. Among these cases, there are a few more instances of reinforcement intermodality, where one modality has a higher status. And although this “higher” modality tends to be language, there are occasions in which the higher status is held by multimodality through prosody or gestures. This line between reinforcement and non-reinforcement, however, is often blurred. Fuzziness between the two notwithstanding, complementary intermodality is more prominent than non-complementary.

Before discussing characteristic prosody and gestural traits, I would like to briefly comment on dialect. As Attardo states (2020), it can be studied in its own analysis. Thus, for extension purposes, it will not be analysed here. There are, however, other prosodic features in Mushu’s humour that play important roles. One is, as commented at the beginning of chapter 4.1., the disparity between Mushu’s appearance (small and thin) and his voice (often loud and with a growl), which showcases this continuous clash between a “big voice” and a “small body”. Another aspect related to prosody worth mentioning in Mushu’s humour is that, because he uses sarcasm on many occasions, he changes his voice to do so, especially when he is imitating other people

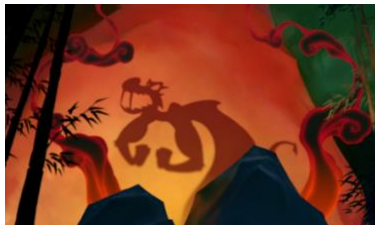
<sup>10</sup> Once more, the cricket becomes target of Mushu’s superiority humour.

<sup>11</sup> Simultaneously, this is a play on the prototype theory through multimodality, specifically on the fuzziness between peripheral category members: DRAGON vs. LIGHTER (they each have characteristics of the other’s category: produce fire).

to emphasise sarcasm (as in example 3: 1.14-1.16, when he changes the tone of his voice). Thus, prosody is used often to convey the metamessage “this is play”.

As I recently commented, there are many cases of non-reinforcement and reinforcement intermodality where multimodality plays an important role. The change of pitch and volume to imitate someone else’s voice and the use of certain predominant gestures are key in many humorous cases. Mushu makes very extensive use of deictic gestures (such as we saw in example 12). However, they are often accompanied by metaphoric gestures. This can be seen very clearly in the following example, where Mushu’s words are followed by metaphoric gestures that activate the humour:

Example 14) [from “Mushu Transcript 2: Meeting Mulan”]



Still 12: “I am the powerful” [27:58]



Stills 13, 14, 15: “the pleasurable” [28:00]

Very often, as in this last example, Mushu makes use of his entire body to make metaphoric gestures to represent the concepts that he is talking about. Thus, his gestures are not limited to facial expressions. However, we should point out a certain one that Mushu presents frequently: a frown. This, knowing of his sarcasm and superiority humour, might help to characterise his humour style as “aggressive”.

#### 4.2. Frozen (2013)

The second film that will be analysed is *Frozen*. This film premiered in 2013 and became one of Disney’s most successful animated feature films, earning over one billion dollars worldwide and winning multiple Oscars.

As for its plotline, crown heir Elsa of Arendelle was born with the power of ice, which she saw as a threat to her people and thus kept hidden. This caused her to retreat from

both the world and her younger sister Anna (oblivious to Elsa's powers), who was forced to live in seclusion within the castle with Elsa. One summer day, for the first time since the sisters' parents' death, the doors of the palace open for Elsa's coronation. Anna meets prince Hans, becomes infatuated by him, and gets engaged to him, all in the span of that same night. Elsa's powers are unveiled during a confrontation with Anna after she discovers her sister's intentions of marrying Hans, to which Elsa is fervently opposed because they have just met. After her powers are revealed, Elsa flees. Anna teams up with Kristoff –an iceman–, Sven –Kristoff's reindeer– and Olaf –a living snowman created by Elsa and identical to one that the sisters built as children–. Together they set to finding Elsa, whose powers of ice have trapped Arendelle in the cold of winter. Anna will accidentally be struck by Elsa's powers, which will curse her to die unless an act of true love saves her. Hans, whom Anna believed to be her salvation, will eventually be revealed as a schemer whose interest in Anna was rooted on the desire to steal the sisters' kingdom from them. In the end, Anna sacrifices herself to save Elsa from Hans' sword and gets frozen to death by the curse after her time runs out. However, this becomes the act of true love that breaks said curse and she comes back to life.

#### *4.2.1. Sidekick contextualisation: Olaf*

*Frozen's* sidekick is Olaf, a snowman created by Elsa who longs to experience summer. His first appearance in the film takes place in minute 45:22. Before we start with the analysis, it is important to note that the sidekick itself is based on humour. Olaf is a living snowman. Some concepts that are initially associated with the prototype SNOWMAN are "winter", "cold" or "snow". However, Olaf is built on an inherent incongruity because he is characterised by an ingenious behaviour towards heat: his biggest dream is to experience summer. Two scripts overlap: SNOWMAN vs. SUMMER (expected vs. unexpected). Thus, the character is presented through the lens of humour. Let us now move onto the analysis on Olaf's main humour traits.

#### *4.2.2. Humour Types*

##### **a) Superiority humour**

Olaf presents few cases of superiority humour. Most of them are not performed by Olaf himself, but rather he is its target, which nevertheless adds to the perception of the sidekick as "funny". On most of these occasions, Olaf is the target of indirect superiority humour (the focus might be in an incongruity, but there is an underlying "aggression").

An example of this takes place at the beginning of the film when Anna and Kristoff toss Olaf's head to each other after they get scared seeing him for the first time<sup>12</sup>.

However, there are some cases where Olaf directs superiority humour to other targets. Let us look at an example of this, when Kristoff first introduces Olaf and Anna to his family, the trolls, who have not yet revealed their true forms and appear as rocks:

Example 1) [from "Olaf Transcript 5: Meeting the trolls"]

- 2.1. KRISTOFF: Meet my family. [He turns around towards the rocks]. Hey,
- 2.2. guys. [ANNA and OLAF stare wide-eyed and open-mouthed]
- 2.3. ANNA: They're rocks.
- 2.4. KRISTOFF: [To the rocks] You are a sight for sore eyes.
- 2.5. OLAF: [To ANNA] (Whispers) He's crazy.
- 2.6. KRISTOFF: [To the rocks] Rocko's looking sharp as usual. Clay, whoa...
- 2.7. I don't even recognize you. You lost so much weight.
- 2.8. OLAF: [To ANNA] (Whispers) I'll distract him while you run. [He smiles]
- 2.9. (In loud voice) Hi, Sven's family! [He taps a rock] (Speaking slowly and
- 2.10. enunciating clearly) It's nice to meet you.

[1:03:54-1:04:19]

In this example, Olaf's sudden change from whispering to a loud volume and his use of what could be considered "baby talk" in 2.9-2.10. showcase Olaf's intention to establish some social distance with the rocks. Furthermore, the fact that he believes Kristoff to be crazy but decides to "follow along" to give Anna time to leave can be considered a violation of the quality maxim because, technically, he is not being truthful (2.9-2.10). Although found in cases much like these, superiority humour is not prominent in Olaf's performance.

### **b) Incongruity humour**

Most of Olaf's humorous utterances can be explained through the incongruity theory because they mainly play on a clash between scripts (between a more salient frame and an unexpected one). This is often achieved through play on prototypical semantics or syntax. Let us look at examples of this.

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<sup>12</sup> This is also achieved through multimodality and the prototype theory by presenting similarities between peripheral members of categories: OLAF'S HEAD vs. SNOWBALL vs. BALL.

Example 2) [from “Olaf Transcript 1: Meeting Olaf”]

- 2.11. OLAF: Oh. [Clasps hands and moves around] I don’t know why, but I’ve  
2.12. always loved the idea of summer. And sun, and all things hot.  
2.13. KRISTOFF: Really? [Smirks and leans closer to Olaf] I’m guessing you  
2.14. don’t have much experience with heat.  
2.15. OLAF: [Stares at KRISTOFF for a second] Nope. But sometimes I like to  
2.16. close my eyes and imagine what it would be like when summer does  
2.17. come.

[47:20-47:39]

In this extract of the transcription, we detect incongruity humour through the script opposition that mostly characterizes Olaf: he is a snowman whose biggest dream is to experience summer. Language helps to emphasise this by using the verb “love” followed by words that fall within one same semantic field: “summer” (2.12). The audience picks up on this and identifies the overlapping scripts (SNOWMAN vs. SUMMER), which triggers the humour.

Something similar happens with one of Olaf’s trademark sentences: “I’m Olaf and I like warm hugs”. Said by any other character, the use of the collocation “warm hugs” would most likely not be humorous. Here, however, because the audience has identified the constant underlying incongruity of a snowman who loves summer, it becomes humorous. “Warm” presents ambiguity and breaks the semantic prototype associated to the collocation (a figurative meaning). In these cases, the role of contextualisation should be highlighted, because, as we said, it is Olaf’s ingenious love for summer (context) that makes his words funny. Similarly, another one of Olaf’s trademark sentences, “some people are worth melting for”<sup>13</sup>, becomes humorous thanks to context. This is also a play on syntactic prototype: the choice of the word “melting” instead of the usual “dying” becomes funny because –with Olaf being the speaker– the two verbs are synonyms.

In fact, Olaf’s humour is mostly rooted on pragmatics. We can see it in example 3, where Anna decides to go into Elsa’s castle alone before the others. She uses the expression “Just give us a minute” (2.27), which is often used when the speaker intends (illocutionary act) for the hearer to wait for an undetermined amount of time and give them some privacy.

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<sup>13</sup> Found in the transcript in example 11 (2.64).

Example 3) [from “Olaf Transcript 3: The Glass Castle”]

- 2.18. ANNA: [Gasps as the doors to the castle open] It opened. That’s a first.  
2.19. Oh. [Looks at OLAF and KRISTOFF] You should probably wait out here.  
2.20. KRISTOFF: What?  
2.21. ANNA: Last time I introduced her to a guy, she froze everything.  
2.22. KRISTOFF: But, but... Oh, come on! [He gestures to the castle] It’s a  
2.23. palace made of ice! Ice is my life!  
2.24. OLAF: [Waves KRISTOFF goodbye] Bye, Sven!  
2.25. ANNA: You, too, Olaf.  
2.26. OLAF: Me?  
2.27. ANNA: Just give us a minute.  
2.28. OLAF: Okay. [Watches ANNA as she enters the castle. The doors close  
2.29. behind her] (Softly) One, two, three, [KRISTOFF joins him] four...

[53:24-53:52]

Pragmatics give the expression “give us a minute” a salient figurative meaning. Olaf fails to incorporate this knowledge and interprets Anna’s words literally, providing a different perlocutive act than the one intended, which causes the humour. Thus, this could be seen also as a violation of the maxim of relevance.

There are other cases of incongruity humour where the context provided by the image plays a key role in the interpretation because an ambiguity is set between the salient meaning of an expression and the image-activated one. This can be seen in the following examples:

Example 4) [from “Olaf Transcript 4: Fighting Marshmallow”]

- 2.30. [KRISTOFF and ANNA have been running away from MARSHMALLOW  
2.31. and encounter a cliff. They decide to climb down with a rope to escape.  
2.32. They end up hanging from the rope after ANNA jumps hastily and the  
2.33. rope slides from the snow]  
2.34. OLAF: [Comes running dishevelled, body parts disorganised] (Panting)  
2.35. Man am I out of shape. (Gasps) [He reorders his body] There we go.

[1:00:00-1:00:09]

Example 5) [from “Olaf Transcript 4: Fighting Marshmallow”]



Still 16 (2.34-2.35) [1:00:04]

Olaf uses the expression “am I out of shape” (2.35) –whose salient interpretation is to refer to one’s lack of fitness endurance– and emphasises it with prosodic features (gasping and panting). What truly makes this utterance humorous is the external information that we gather from the image (example 5): Olaf’s body is completely disorganised, thus his words “out of shape” apply literally. This could be considered a play on semantic prototypicality: the image brings forth ambiguity in an expression otherwise monosemic (easiest accessed meaning). This same mechanism is used in other occasions:

Example 6) [from “Olaf Transcript 4: Fighting Marshmallow”]

- 2.36. OLAF: [OLAF tries to grab hold of MARSHMALLOW’s leg to stop him,  
2.37. but MARSHMALLOW keeps walking, unbothered]. This is not making  
2.38. much of a difference, is it? [MARSHMALLOW sends him flying away and  
2.39. OLAF falls down the cliff that ANNA and KRISTOFF are hanging from  
2.40. while they hold on to their rope].  
2.41. ANNA: Olaf! [Makes to grab OLAF while he falls but misses him.]  
2.42. OLAF: [Collides with the rocks and keeps plummeting down.] (Grunts)  
2.43. Hang in there, guys!

[1:00:24-1:00:32]

Here, the literal use of an expression that is otherwise used figuratively is seen in 2.43. Much like in example 4, the audience initially understands “hang in there” figuratively, because it is its most salient interpretation. However, a second one appears with the knowledge that Anna and Kristoff are indeed hanging from the cliff (shown immediately before Olaf’s words). Thus, once again, the literal interpretation of a figurative expression becomes a source of incongruous humour (stemming from the overlap of the two possible meanings that apply to the phrase: a salient one and a new one presented by the context).



Another repeated mechanism to build incongruity is the play on non-prototypicality of category members through multimodality. An example takes place during Olaf's first appearance on screen, right after he introduces himself to Anna:

Example 7) [from "Olaf Transcript 1: Meeting Olaf"]

2.44. OLAF: And you are...

2.45. ANNA: Oh. Um... I'm Anna.

2.46. OLAF: [Looks at KRISTOFF and SVEN] And who's the funky looking  
2.47. donkey over there?

2.48. ANNA: That's Sven.

2.49. OLAF: Uh-huh. And who's the reindeer?

2.50. ANNA: Sven.

2.51. OLAF: Oh, they're... Oh. Okay. Makes things easier for me.

[46:43-46:58]

This case of humour is dragged on throughout the entire film. In this case, the incongruity comes from the overlapping of three scripts: DONKEY vs. REINDEER vs. KRISTOFF. The foregrounded incongruity appears to be DONKEY vs. REINDEER because of the start of the set of humorous utterances (2.46-2.47). However, when the audience identifies the third participant (2.49), they detect the backgrounded incongruity REINDEER vs. KRISTOFF.

With the use of "funky looking donkey", Anna and the audience associate "donkey" with its closest category member found in the context (image): "reindeer" and, thus, Sven. Hence her answer. It is Olaf's next question that activates a third script, because the audience realises that the words "funky looking donkey" referred to Kristoff and not to Sven, the reindeer. Thus, the participants and context are key to the humour. Furthermore, multimodality enhances the incongruity (example 8): both Kristoff and Sven are on the right and at similar heights (Kristoff is kneeling), leaving the audience without knowing for certain who Olaf is referring to because deixis (2.47: "over there") can apply to both.

Example 8) [from “Olaf Transcript 1: Meeting Olaf”]



Still 17: “Who’s the funky looking donkey over there?” (2.46-2.47) [46:50]

This is a very clear example of the role that the prototype theory can play<sup>14</sup>. The similarity between members of the two categories leads the audience to establish a direct link between Olaf’s words and the closest member of the category that “donkey” belongs in (thanks to semantic relationships such as “animal”, “furry”). The clash with the third script: KRISTOFF, and concepts such as “human”, “man”, creates the humour. This humorous utterance is repeated throughout the film (Olaf calls Kristoff Sven in multiple occasions) and is only resolved when Anna and Olaf meet the trolls, who call Kristoff by his actual name:

Example 9) [from “Olaf Transcript 5: Meeting the trolls”]

2.52. [The rocks start to move and turn into trolls. They assemble around

2.53. KRISTOFF]

2.54. TROLL1: Kristoff’s home! [They all scream excitedly]

2.55. TROLL2: Kristoff’s here!

2.56. OLAF: Kristoff’s home! [He lowers his arms and looks confusedly to the

2.57. troll next to him] Wait, “Kristoff”?

[1:04:36-1:04:49]

Olaf’s question “Kristoff?” (2.57) resolves the incongruity and provides for yet another humorous utterance from the sidekick. This is enhanced by a sudden change in facial features and gestures: from jumping with his arms outstretched, arched brows and smiling, to lowering his arms and furrowing his brows. In all, pragmatics and the prototype theory are key to Olaf’s incongruity humour.

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<sup>14</sup> As aforementioned, there are other cases in which multimodality plays on the prototype theory, such as Example 11, where the humour comes partly from the fuzziness between a stalactite and a spyglass (peripheral category members: both have the same shape and can be used with a similar purpose).

### c) Release Humour

The second most prominent humour theory applied in Olaf's humour is the release theory. This is especially highlighted during the climax of the film, when Prince Hans' deceit has been revealed and Anna has been left to freeze to death from her curse. All hope seems to be lost, yet Olaf's behaviour breaks up the tension and remains a source of humour.

Example 10) [from "Olaf Transcript 6: Saving Anna"]

- 2.58. [ANNA is lying on the floor, almost frozen to death after HANS leaves  
2.59. her to her doom]. [The doorknob rattles]  
2.60. ANNA: (Whispers) Help. [The door opens and reveals a carrot stuck into  
2.61. the keyhole].  
2.62. OLAF: (Giggles) [He grabs his nose and puts it back into his face]  
2.63. (Gasps) Anna!

[1:19:41-1:19:58]

Example 11) [from "Olaf Transcript 6: Saving Anna"]

- 2.64. ANNA: Olaf, you're melting.  
2.65. OLAF: Some people are worth melting for. [He holds his face together  
2.66. as it melts]. Just maybe not right this second. [A gust of cold air opens  
2.67. the window] Don't worry, I've got it. [He runs to the window] (Screaming)  
2.68. We're gonna get through... (No longer screaming) Oh, wait [He lifts a  
2.69. finger to ANNA]. (With a calm tone) Hang on, I'm getting something. [He  
2.70. grabs the ice stalactite from the window and uses it as a spyglass].  
2.71. (Gasps) (Screaming) It's Kristoff and Sven! They're coming back this  
2.72. way.

[1:21:14-1:21:42]

In both examples we can detect instances of humour as release, such as in 2.60-2.61 and 2.68-2.70, where the humour breaks the tension in a scene. In the last example, Olaf suddenly changing his prosodic features, as well as him grabbing an ice stalactite and using it as a spyglass (drawing again from the prototype theory, now through the fuzziness between categories: "stalactite" and "spyglass") becomes humorous and breaks up the seriousness of the scene.

Going back to shortly after the scene in which Olaf and Kristoff wait outside the glass castle for Anna (example 3), this case is also one of release humour. The two sisters

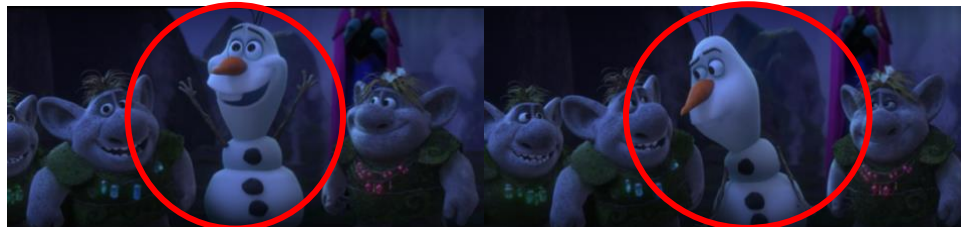
are in the middle of a tense reunion when Olaf barges in skipping and screams “Sixty!” with arms outstretched and a high-pitched voice after “waiting a minute” (2.27). The resolution of that incongruity in this dramatic moment becomes the humorous break in the tension built prior to his entrance. Thus, there is often a violation of the maxim of relevance.

#### 4.2.3. Intermodality: prosody and gestures

As for intermodality, on most occasions it is complementary: speech and multimodality work together to create humour. There are a few more cases of reinforcement intermodality (one has slightly more weight). This often happens with language being the focus and multimodality enhancing it through prosody or gestures. Nevertheless, there are also cases where it is multimodality that plays a slightly bigger role in the humour<sup>15</sup>.

In complementary intermodality, the two most frequent prosodic and gestural features used to enhance linguistic humour (in cases of reinforcement intermodality) are very sudden changes in the intonation (for instance, a quick change from normal volume or screaming to whispering) or quick changes in his facial expression through his eyebrows and mouth (as in example 12).

Example 12) [from “Olaf Transcript 5: Meeting the trolls”]



Still 18: “Kristoff’s home!” (2.56) [1:04:47]

Still 19: “Wait, Kristoff?” (2.57) [1:04:49]

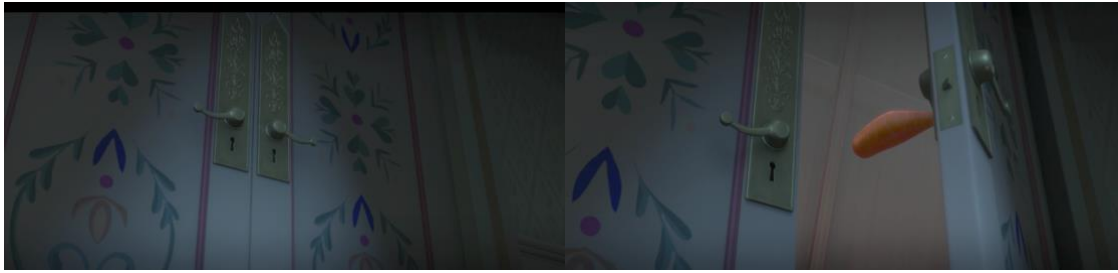
Another way in which multimodality enhances linguistic humour is through sudden stops of music, which almost always applies in release humour. This reinforces the break from the tension and the metamessage “this is funny”.

There are, however, multiple cases of non-complementary intermodality, where language has no role in the humour. One of these occasions can be seen in example 14, where both the image and Olaf’s giggle create the humour.

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<sup>15</sup> Cases such as examples 4 (“out of shape”) and 6 (“hang in there”).

Example 13) [from “Olaf Transcript 6: Saving Anna”]



Still 20 (2.59) [1:19:46]

Still 21 (2.60-2.61) [1:19:54]

Here, there is an opposition between NOSE vs. CARROT vs. KEY, NOSE vs. CARROT being in the background (not necessarily humorous: the prototypical SNOWMAN has a carrot as a nose) and NOSE vs. KEY being in the foreground and the main source of humour.

Another instance of non-verbalised humour takes place when Olaf is trying to build a fire for Anna and, when placing the logs in the fireplace, accidentally drops his arm (see example 14). The opposing scripts WOOD vs. ARM are triggered visually thanks to multimodality. This is another example of fuzziness between peripheral category members: his arm *is* technically wood. Thus, often, non-verbalised humour is built through play on the prototype theory.

Example 14) [from “Olaf Transcript 6: Saving Anna”]



Still 22 [1:10:06]

As commented earlier, sudden changes in prosody and facial expressions are Olaf’s most recurrent prosodic and gestural humorous traits. Furthermore, there are two multimodal features related to them that are constant and representative of Olaf as a humorous sidekick because they convey the metamessage “This is funny” (“This” being Olaf): his ever-present smile, raised eyebrows and giggle. The first two (which happen simultaneously) account for a visual contrast with the rest of characters in shot, who do not show the same facial features (see following stills). This could be

interpreted as him being in a constant state of wonder with the world, which heighten his naiveté.



Still 23 [50:56]

Still 24 [53:16]



Still 25 [53:26]

Still 26 [58:18]

His giggle works similarly. In several of the humorous instances analysed, Olaf giggles. This becomes a trademark that enables the audience to identify him by hearing him (it always has the same prosodic features: *Image 1*), and also serves to express the same metamessage as earlier.

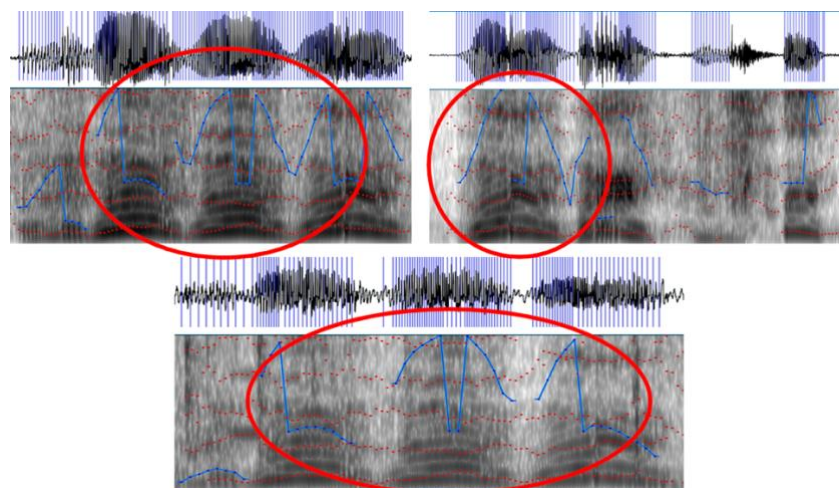


Image 1: Olaf's giggle spectrograms (exported from Praat)

As for gestures, Olaf mostly relies on facial expressions, making very extensive use of his eyebrows. When also using his arms, his discourse is mostly characterised by a use of beat gestures (not semantically linked to his speech) and he sometimes uses emblematic gestures. In all, Olaf's body language is quite stiff: his gestures are limited mostly to his face and –sometimes– his arms.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS

As seen in the analysis, there are similarities and differences between the two sidekicks' humour styles. Let us look at them and discuss the results. See figures (1) and (2) following to illustrate the comments that will be made on each sidekick's humour. The purpose of this paper is not to make a quantitative analysis, but the following percentages will help to present qualitative comments in this discussion.

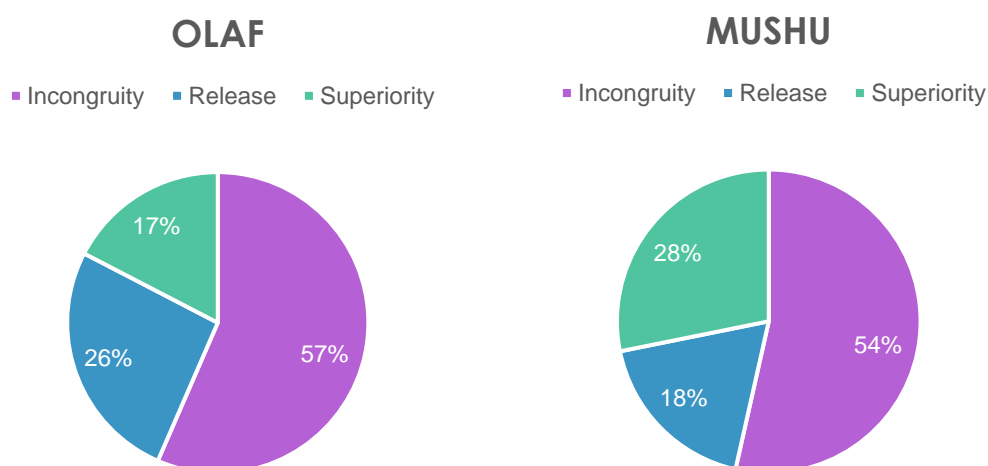


Figure 1: Humour Type Totals found in Olaf

Figure 2: Humour Type Totals found in Mushu

As for types of humour detected in the analysed cases from all scenes in our corpus, incongruity humour is used by both sidekicks in more than 50% of cases. However, the second most frequent humour type varies: Mushu's second most used humour theory seems to be superiority, whereas Olaf's is humour as release. Thus, there is also a difference in the two sidekicks' third humour type: Mushu's is release, but Olaf's is superiority. This might already show a different approach not only to the humour-building, but also the personality-building of each sidekick. We should keep in mind that multiple humour theories can be used in one same humorous instance. Let us now look at the main traits of each humour type, summarized in Table (1).

First, as for the use of superiority humour, this theory is used frequently by Mushu, but not as much by Olaf. Furthermore, Mushu uses superiority humour built mostly through sarcasm and imperatives that place him in a higher status than the target (usually the cricket) and is also heightened by a clash of frames (such as CRICKET vs. ASSISTANT). Olaf, however, rarely uses superiority humour. When he does, it is mostly based on a violation of the maxim of quality or on non-verbal humour. However, most of his superiority humour takes place, like with Mushu, when other characters target it at the sidekick. This adds to the perception of the sidekicks as "funny".

## MUSHU

## OLAF

<i>Superiority Humour</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prominent</li> <li>- Target: mostly the cricket</li> <li>- Sarcasm, imperatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not prominent</li> <li>- Target: mostly himself</li> <li>- Maxim of quality, non-verbal</li> </ul>
<i>Incongruity Humour</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Semantic prototype: ambiguity</li> <li>- Syntactic prototype: change of fixed expressions, clash of frames (role reversal)</li> <li>- Prototype theory through multimodality</li> <li>- Intentionality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Semantic prototype: ambiguity</li> <li>- Syntactic prototype: change of fixed expressions, activation of literal meanings</li> <li>- Prototype theory through multimodality</li> <li>- Lack of knowledge of the world</li> </ul>
<i>Release Humour</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Violation of relevance maxim</li> <li>- Verbalised and non-verbal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Violation of relevance maxim</li> <li>- Verbalised and non-verbal</li> </ul>

Table 1: Humour Types

Second, there is incongruity humour. This is the most used humour theory in both sidekicks. There are similarities in the strategies used to build it: they play on the prototype theory, which gets extended to syntax and semantics. Thus, both sidekicks use incongruity humour where a salient structure (syntax) or a salient meaning (semantics) clashes with one that is activated through context (presented through multimodality). In semantics, this often results in ambiguity or polysemy. One difference between the characters is, however, that, unlike Olaf, Mushu often uses clashes in frames through role reversals (by using expressions that are usually presented in somewhat fixed contexts that clash with the one used in the film). Another difference between them is the use of multimodality to bring forth the literal meaning of an otherwise figurative expression (in its salient interpretation). This strategy is mostly used by Olaf. Furthermore, one final difference between them is Mushu's intentionality, which also plays on his knowledge of the world, which contrasts with Olaf's lack of it sometimes.

Despite the differences, there is another major aspect in which both sidekicks coincide: the use of the prototype theory presented through multimodality (specifically through image). In both sidekicks there are multiple occasions in which the prototype theory is used mostly to present 1) peripheral members of two categories and 2) resemblance between members of different categories. In relation to this, both sidekicks make a similar approach to a specific play on the category ANIMAL: Olaf's SVEN vs. KRISTOFF vs. REINDEER clash and Mushu's play on HORSE vs. COW, and HORSE



vs. SHEEP. Furthermore, pragmatics play a key role in the humour of both sidekicks, which is almost always tied to extralinguistic information. Thus, tying this further to our theoretical background, sidekick humour is primarily referential.

Last, we have humour as release. Although present in both sidekicks and used similarly to break up the tension in a dramatic scene, it is Olaf's second most used humour theory, whereas Mushu uses it the least frequently. In both characters this is achieved through complementary intermodality, but there are also many cases where multimodality (image and gestures, mostly) plays the main role. Another way in which humour is used as release is through an apparent violation of the maxim of relevance: using an utterance that is initially considered "inappropriate" (such as Olaf's "give us a minute" resolution when he enters the glass castle or Mushu's rushing of Mulan during the attack on the Huns). The playful use that both sidekicks make of prototypical syntactic expressions and prototypical meanings (bringing forth ambiguities) could also be considered a type of release humour, following Freud's conceptualisation of humour as a "break" from the norms of language (Attardo, 2020). Next, we observe intermodality and, specifically, prosody and gestures. See Table (2) summarizing the main traits detected in the sidekicks' use of intermodality.

	<b>MUSHU</b>	<b>OLAF</b>
<i>Intermodality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mostly complementary</li> <li>- Non-complementary intermodality: image and gestures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mostly complementary</li> <li>- Non-complementary intermodality: image and gestures</li> </ul>
<i>Prosodic and gestural trademarks</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Growl, high volume</li> <li>- Frown, deictic and metaphoric gestures (entire body)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Giggle, high tone</li> <li>- Smile and raised eyebrows, change of facial expressions</li> </ul>

*Table 2: Intermodality*

As for intermodality, both sidekicks use it mostly in a complementary capacity. However, there are also multiple occasions where the humour is non-verbalised, rooted in gestures or the entire image. The type of gestures used are different: Mushu uses mostly deictic and metaphorical gestures made with his entire body, whereas Olaf relies on facial expressions (through his brows, mostly) and sometimes beat or metaphorical gestures with his arms. As for prosody, they both use it similarly: sudden changes in volume or pitch. Furthermore, multimodality is also used to present characteristic prosodic and gestural features for each sidekick: Olaf is multimodally

characterised by his giggle and smile, and Mushu is identified through his growl and frown. This contrast in their multimodal traits can be tied to their approaches to humour: Mushu’s frown and growl add to his use of humour as aggression, whereas Olaf’s smile and giggle highlight his lack of knowledge of the world, which characterises his incongruity humour. This leads us to final comments on inherent humour. Table (3) shows how inherent incongruity is used in each sidekick to convey the metamessage “This is funny”.

	<b>MUSHU</b>	<b>OLAF</b>
<i>Inherent humour (incongruity)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Small body vs. big voice</li> <li>- Non-prototypicality of category member (lizard-looking dragon)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Snowman vs. summer</li> <li>- Non-prototypicality of category member (snowman who loves summer)</li> </ul>
<i>Resulting personality</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Clever, cunning, sarcastic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Naïve, ingenuous, cheerful</li> </ul>

*Table 3: Inherent incongruity and metamessage (“This is funny”)*

Perhaps the main similarity in the humour of both sidekicks is the use of inherent incongruity to present the metamessage: “This (the sidekick) is funny”. Olaf is presented as a snowman who loves summer (which showcases his naïveté) through a clash between SNOWMAN vs. SUMMER. Mushu is presented as a small and lizard-looking dragon with a “big voice”, which highlights the clash between MUSHU vs. DRAGON vs. LIZARD. Thus, both sidekicks are presented as non-prototypical members of their categories, which presents them through the lens of humour from the beginning. Furthermore, there is a specific prosodic feature that, accompanied by a certain facial expression, shapes the sidekick’s humorous personality: Mushu as cunning (frown, growl, superiority, and sarcasm) and Olaf as naïve (giggle, smile, incongruity, and lack of knowledge of the world).

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

After carrying out this study on sidekick humour, we can try to answer the research questions presented at the beginning of the paper. As for question (i), in which I asked myself how humour was attained linguistically, it happens mainly thanks to script opposition (Raskin, 1985; Chen, Jiang; 2018): a salient schema is altered and a clash between prototypical and non-prototypical elements creates humour. This opposition is attained through semantic phenomena (polysemy and ambiguity) that stem from pragmatics and multimodality. In most cases, the maxim of relevance (Grice, 1969) is violated. This is directly related to this idea of overlap or clash in scripts: an apparently “inappropriate” element is used where another one would be more salient.

As for question (ii), regarding the role of multimodality in humour, following Zhang’s taxonomy (2009, in Chen, Jiang; 2018) it is mostly complementary in sidekick-humour, that is, it plays into the humour development. Multimodality proved to be tightly interwoven with language: both are necessary for the humour. However, there are also cases where it is the sole element in sidekick-humour. It does, thus, provide for more humorous moments. However, as an answer to question (iii), where I inquired on the purpose of humour and to whether or not it was mainly to break up tension: no, humour is not necessarily only used to break up dramatism. Although humour as release *is* present in both sidekicks, it was not the most used humour type, rather incongruity humour was.

Last, to our final research question (iv), in which I aimed to see if there are patterns between the studied sidekicks’ humour-building strategies, we could say that, to an extent, yes, there are patterns between them according to this paper’s corpus of study. This apparent “sidekick humour formula” could consist of an inherent incongruity in the sidekick, who is built on a script opposition that plays throughout the film and conveys the metamessage “This (the sidekick) is funny”. Another parallelism is the purpose, among others, of breaking up tension in a scene.

In the end, the linguistic and multimodal mechanisms used in both sidekicks are part of their identity building. Mushu’s extensive use of superiority humour, sarcasm, growl, and frown help to identify him as cunning. Olaf’s repeated use of his brows, incongruities, giggle, smile and apparent lack of knowledge of the world heighten his naïveté and present him as ingenuous and cheerful. Thus, we could say that humour is not only inherent in sidekicks but also a means to further solidify their personalities.

This paper has revealed many possible further lines of study, such as research on what humour types might be more “successful” among different audiences (and how they may be interpreted differently), how humour is built in non-speaking sidekicks as opposed to speaking-sidekicks, and even which other Disney sidekicks might follow humour building strategies like the ones presented in this paper, which would allow for broader generalisations. Thus, I believe humour studies present many research routes worth exploring.

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## **ANALYSED FILMS**

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## ANNEX: TRANSCRIPTIONS

In this annex, I include the transcriptions in full of the scenes from the corpus used in the paper. Timestamps of their placement in the films are also provided. Both films were analysed through purchased versions and all rights are reserved to the Walt Disney Company.

### A) Mushu

#### 1. Meeting Mushu | [20:50-24:35]

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GREAT ANCESTOR: Mushu, awaken.

MUSHU: [sits up in a Frankenstein fashion] I live! So, tell me what mortal needs my protection, Great Ancestor. You just say the word and I'm there.

GREAT ANCESTOR: Mushu...

MUSHU: And let me say somethin'. Anybody who's foolish enough to threaten our family, vengeance will be mine! [He growls]

GREAT ANCESTOR: Mushu! These are the family guardians. They...

MUSHU: Protect the family.

GREAT ANCESTOR: And you, O demoted one?

MUSHU: I ring the gong.

GREAT ANCESTOR: That's right. Now, wake up the ancestors.

MUSHU: One family reunion comin' right up. [Starts ringing the gong] Okay, people, people, look alive. Let's go. Come on. Get up. Let's move it. Rise and shine. Y'all way past the beauty sleep thing, trust me.

FEMALE ANCESTOR 1: I knew it. I knew it. That Mulan was a troublemaker from the start!

MALE ANCESTOR 1: Don't look at me. She gets it from your side of the family.

FEMALE ANCESTOR 2: She's just trying to help her father.

GREAT ANCESTOR: Silence! We must send the most powerful of all. [Points at the dragon guardian statue outside]

MUSHU: [laughs] Okay, okay, I get the drift. I'll go. [Ancestors laugh] Oh you don't think I can do it? Watch this here. [Inhales and exhales a spur of fire] Jump back. I'm pretty hot, huh? Don't make me have to singe nobody to prove no point.

GREAT ANCESTOR: You had your chance to protect the Fa family.

FEMALE ANCESTOR 3: Your misguidance led Fa Deng to disaster.

FA DENG: [Holding his severed head in his hand] Yeah, thanks a lot.

MUSHU: And your point is?

GREAT ANCESTOR: The point is we will be sending a real dragon to retrieve Mulan.

MUSHU: What... What... I'm a real dragon!

GREAT ANCESTOR: You are not worthy of this spot. Now, awaken the Great Stone Dragon. [Throws Mushu out the door. As he leaves, there are brake sounds. MUSHU pokes his head into the temple.]

MUSHU: So, you'll get back to me on the job thing? [Great Ancestor throws gong at him and smashes his face] [He walks down the stairs] Just one chance, is that too much to ask? I mean it's not like it'd kill ya. [To the statue of the Great Stone Dragon] Yo, Rocky, wake up! Ya gotta go fetch Mulan! [Throws kisses at him] Come on, boy! Go get her! Go on! [Throws gong mallet, pats his lap, throws more kisses and whistles] Come on. [Growls at him] Hello? Hello! [Starts hitting statue with the gong and rips its ear out] Hello! [Tries to stick ear back] Uh-oh. [Statue crumbles]

MUSHU: [To the remaining head from the debris of statue] Uh, Stony? Stony? Oh, man, they're gonna kill me. [Shakes]

GREAT ANCESTOR: Great Stone Dragon, have you awakened?

MUSHU: [Putting on statue head] Uh, uh... Yes, I just woke up. I'm... I'm the Great Stone Dragon. Good morning. I will go forth and fetch Mulan. Did [stutters] I mention that I was the Great Stone Dragon?

GREAT ANCESTOR: Go! The fate of the Fa family rests in your claws.

MUSHU: Don't even worry about it. I will not lose face. [Falls down and gets completely squashed by the head]

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## 2. Mulan meets Mushu

[27:15 – 29:10]

MULAN: Who am I fooling? It's going to take a miracle to get me into the army.

MUSHU: [Only his amplified voice and his shadow, big and surrounded by fire and smoke] Did I hear someone ask for a miracle? Let me hear you say 'Aaah'!

MULAN: Aaah!

MUSHU: That's close enough.

MULAN: A ghost.

MUSHU: Get ready, Mulan. [Gospel music playing in the background.] Your serpentine salvation is at hand! For I have been sent by your ancestors [the cricket's shadow appears in the corner making a Mushu face with its hands. Mushu kicks him out] to guide you through your masquerade. [To the cricket,



who we see is keeping the fire alive. Change in voice tone] Come on. If you're gonna stay, you're gonna work. [Back to Mulan in amplified voice] So heed my word! 'Cause if the army finds out you're a girl, the penalty is death!

MULAN: Who are you?

MUSHU: Who am I? Who am I? [both fingers pointing to him and fire spits] I am the guardian of lost souls. I am the powerful [shows biceps], the pleasurable [rubs hands down his body as he rolls it], the indestructible Mushu [he appears and bows]. [MULAN's jaw drops] [MUSHU chuckles] Pretty hot, huh? [He gets squashed by the horse and groans, has one black eye. He coughs]

MULAN: [As she picks him up] Uh, my ancestors sent a little lizard to help me?

MUSHU: Hey, dragon, dragon, not lizard. I don't do that tongue thing. [Does the tongue thing]

MULAN: You're... [MUSHU climbs a bamboo]

MUSHU: Intimidating? Awe-inspiring?

MULAN: Tiny.

MUSHU: Of course. I'm travel size for your convenience. If I was my real size, your cow here would die of fright. [Pats the horse. It tries to bite MUSHU. He frowns and points to the floor.] Down, Bessie. [To MULAN] My powers are beyond your mortal imagination. For instance, my eyes can see straight through your armor. [He opens his eyes wide and looks at MULAN's chest. She slaps him.] All right, that's it! Dishonor! Dishonor on your whole family. [To the cricket] Make a note of this. Dishonor on you. Dishonor on your cow... Dis- [MULAN covers his mouth with her hands]

MULAN: Stop. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. I'm just nervous, I've never done this before.

MUSHU: Then you're gonna have to trust me. And don't you slap me no more. We clear on that? All right. Okey-dokey. Let's get this show on the road! [To the cricket] Cri-Kee, get the bags. [Clapping] Let's move it, heifer.

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### 3. Act like a man

[29:10 – 30:30]

MUSHU: Okay, this is it. Time to show 'em your man-walk. Shoulders back, chest high, [he corrects MULAN's body as he speaks] feet apart, head up and strut. Two, three... Break it down. [MULAN struts] Hup, two, three. And work it!

[MULAN and MUSHU reach a series of tents. There is a man picking on his nose, one clipping his toenails with chopsticks...]

MUSHU: Beautiful, isn't it?

MULAN: They're disgusting.

MUSHU: No, they're men. Now, you're gonna have to act just like them, so, pay attention.

MAN 1: Look. [Shows a tattoo of a red dragon covering his entire torso] This tattoo will protect me from harm.

YAO: Uhm [Punches MAN 1. LI laughs]

LING: I hope you can get your money back.

MULAN: I don't think I can do this.

MUSHU: It's all attitude. Be tough, like this guy here.

YAO: [Snorts and spits] What are you lookin' at?

MUSHU: Punch him. It's how men say hello. [MULAN punches him and he collides with CHIEN-PO's belly].

CHIEN PO: Yao, you've made a friend.

MUSHU: Good. Now slap him on the behind. They like that. [MULAN slaps him]

YAO: Whoa-ho-ho! I'm gonna hit you so hard, it'll make your ancestors dizzy.

CHIEN-PO: Yao, relax and chant with me. [They chant together as MUSHU and MULAN watch wide-eyed]. Feel better?

YAO: Yeah. Ah, you ain't worth my time. Chicken boy.

MUSHU: [MULAN has turned around; he sticks out of her collar] Chicken boy? Say that to my face, ya limp noodle!

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#### 4. What's your name?

[33:30-34:04]

LI SHANG: What's your name? [MULAN stammers]

CHI FU: Your commanding officer just asked you a question.

MULAN: I've got a name. And it's a boy's name, too.

MUSHU: [Hiding from General LI SHANG on the back of MULAN's collar] Ling, How 'bout Ling?

MULAN: [To MUSHU, nodding to LING at the back.] His name is Ling.

LI SHANG: I didn't ask for his name. I asked for yours!

MUSHU: Try, [puts his hands on his face] uh, uh, ah, Chu.

MULAN: Ah Chu.

LI SHANG: Ah Chu?

MUSHU: Gesundheit. [Laughs and wipes a fake tear from his eye with MULAN's collar] I kill myself.

MULAN: [To MUSHU] Mushu...

LI SHANG: Mushu?

MULAN: No.

LI SHANG: Then what is it?

MUSHU: Ping. Ping was my best friend growin' up.

MULAN: It's Ping.

LI SHANG: Ping?

MUSHU: Of course, Ping did steal my gr- [MULAN clamps her hand around his head]

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5. First day of training

[35:08-36:10]

MUSHU: [Twists the cricket's wings and uses it as an alarm clock]. All right! Rise and shine, Sleeping Beauty. Come on. Hup, hup, hup. [MULAN moans. MUSHU takes the covers off her] Get your clothes, get ready. I got breakfast for you. [He comes back wearing an apron and holding a bowl]. Look, you get porridge, and it's happy to see you. [The cricket pops out of the porridge. MUSHU throws him away with the chopsticks]. Get outta there! You gonna make people sick.

MULAN: Am I late?

MUSHU: No time to talk. [Feeds Mulan as he speaks] Now remember, it's your first day of training, so listen to your teacher and no fightin', play nice with the other kids, unless, of course, one of the other kids wanna fight, then you have to kick the other kid's butt.

MULAN: [With her mouth full] But I don't wanna kick the other kid's butt.

MUSHU: Don't talk with your mouth full. Now let's see your war face. [MULAN looks at him wide-eyed with her mouth full of porridge]. Oh, I think my bunny slippers just ran for cover. Come on! Scare me, girl.

MULAN: [Growls]

MUSHU: Yeah, that's my tough looking warrior. That's what I'm talking about. Now, get out there and make me proud. [The horse neighs and snorts] What do you mean the troops just left?

MULAN: They what? [She jumps out of the tent]

MUSHU: [Muffled sounds from inside the tent. He gets out carrying her sword] Wait! You forgot your sword. My little baby, off to destroy people. [He tears up and whimpers. The cricket comforts him]

MUSHU: No, this is not a good idea. What if somebody sees you?

MULAN: Just because I look like a man doesn't mean I have to smell like one.

MUSHU: [Leaning on his tail] So a couple of guys [covers eyes with ears] don't rinse out their socks. Picky, picky, picky. [Moves head each time]. [Smiles] Myself, [scratches his belly] I kind of like that corn chip smell. [Water splashes on him] [MULAN gets in the water. He prods to the lake with his eyes covered with his ears] Now, that's enough. Get out before you get all pruney and stuff. [Holds out a towel for her]

MULAN: Mushu, if you're so worried, go stand watch.

MUSHU: [Turns around and throws towel over his shoulder] Yeah, yeah. (Imitates MULAN with a high-pitched voice) Stand watch, Mushu, while I blow our secret with my stupid girlie habits. Pfft! Hygiene!

[YAO, LING and CHIEN PO run to the lake. Someone's underwear lands on Mushu]

MUSHU: We're doomed! There are a couple of things I know they're bound to notice! [He throws the underwear on the cricket and runs to the lake]

**[Starts back at 43:53]**

LING: Come one! Don't be such a- [MUSHU bites LING's behind] Ah! Something bit me.

MUSHU: Ugh. (coughs) What a nasty flavor.

LING: Snake! (Screams) [LING runs away] [MULAN whistles to the horse and seizes the moment to leave.]

[MUSHU hangs from the horse's tail and spits]

LING: Some king of the rock. [YAO pushes him]

MULAN: Boy, that was close.

MUSHU: No, that was vile. You owe me big. [He brushes his teeth and puts tooth paste in his mouth]

MULAN: I never want to see a naked man again, [The rest of the soldiers run past her naked towards the lake]

MUSHU: Hey, don't look at me. I ain't bitin' no more butts.

CHI FU: Those boys are no more fit to be soldiers than you are to be Captain. Once the General reads my report, your troops will never see battle.

MUSHU: No, you don't! I've worked too hard to get Mulan into this war. This guy's messin' with my plan.

LI SHANG: We're not finished.

CHI FU: Be careful, Captain. The general may be your father, but I am the Emperor's counsel. And, by the way, I got that job on my own. [LI SHANG exits the tent]

MULAN: Hey. I'll hold him, you punch. [LI SHANG ignores her] Or not. For what it's worth, I think you're a great captain.

MUSHU: I saw that.

MULAN: What?

MUSHU: You like him, don't you?

MULAN: No!

MUSHU: Yeah, all right. Yeah, sure. Go to your tent! [MULAN leaves. MUSHU looks at the cricket] I think it's time we took this war into our own hands. [They enter CHI FU's tent. MUSHU stares at a picture while the cricket writes] Okay, let me see what you got. [Reads letter] "From General Li. Dear son, we're waiting for Huns at the pass. It would mean a lot if you'd come and back us up." [He looks up and smiles] That's great, [he leans into the cricket] except you forgot, (changes his voice tone) "And since we're out of potpourri, perhaps you wouldn't mind bringing up some." [He screams] Hello! This is the army! Make it sound more urgent, please! Know what I'm talkin' about? [The cricket starts writing again. MUSHU looks and paces as he writes] That's better. Much better. Let's go. [He grabs the paper sheet from under the cricket's feet and jumps from the table.]

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## 8. Battle against the Huns

[53:01-56:25]

[The army marches, sulking, through the mountains. No one speaks. Suddenly a cannon flies away and explodes. They all look to MULAN is carrying because the cart she is pulling carries the ammunition.]

MUSHU: [Wide eyes. Blinks and points at the cricket next to him].

### **[Starts back at 54:00]**

GENERAL LI: Prepare to fight. If we die, we die with honor. [The soldiers unsheathe their swords. The Huns charge against them.] Yao, aim the cannon at Shan-Yu. [MULAN looks at the reflection of the mountain on her sword. She knocks YAO down, grabs the cannon and runs toward the Huns]

YAO: Hey!

GENERAL LI: Ping! Come back!

[MULAN stops and aims the cannon at the mountain. Shan-Yu approaches]

MUSHU: All right. You might want to light that right about now. [MULAN struggles to light the match] Quickly. Quickly! [MUSHU tugs her ear] [A falcon knocks them down. MULAN looks for her match but uses MUSHU instead to light the cannon] [MUSHU in the air] You missed! How could you miss? He was three feet in front of you!

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9. Saving Mulan

[57:25-58:45]

[The mountain comes down and provokes an avalanche that wipes out the Huns and Mulan's army. MUSHU appears using a shield as a snowboard]

MUSHU: Mulan! Mulan! Mulan? [He grabs hair and pulls it from the snow. It's a Hun.] No. [He looks at the camera and puts him back under] Mulan! [He sees something sticking out and grabs it. It's the cricket] Man, you are one lucky bug.

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10. What are you, a sheep?

[1:03:42-1:03:52]

MUSHU: The truth is, we're both frauds. Your ancestors never sent me. They don't even like me. I mean, you risked your life to help people you love. I risked your life to help myself. At least you had good intentions.

[The cricket chirps and cries]

MUSHU: [Eyes wide and turns to the cricket] What? What do you mean, 'you're not lucky'? [He grabs the cricket] You lied to me? [He looks at the horse] And what are you, a sheep? [He throws the cricket away]

**B) Olaf**

1. Meeting Olaf

[45:07-47:34]

ANNA: I never knew winter could be so beautiful.

OLAF: [not in shot] Yeah. It really is beautiful isn't it. [Anna looks at Sven] But it's so white. You know, how about a little color? I'm thinking maybe some crimson, chartreuse. How about yellow? No, not yellow. Yellow and snow?

[He shudders] No go. [He chuckles] [Anna and Kristoff gasp] Am I right?  
[Anna kicks Olaf's head into Kristoff's hands] Hi.

KRISTOFF: You're creepy.

OLAF: Whoa!

ANNA: I don't want it. [They throw Olaf's head to each other]

KRISTOFF: Back at you.

OLAF: Please don't drop me.

KRISTOFF: Come on, it's just a head.

ANNA: No.

OLAF: All right. We got off to a bad start.

ANNA: Ew, ew, the body! [Throws head at Olaf. He stands back up with his head on upside down. He groans.]

OLAF: Wait, what am I looking at right now? Why are you hanging off the Earth like a bat?

ANNA: All right, wait one second. [She fixes Olaf's head and places it correctly on his body]

OLAF: Oh! Thank you. [He looks at his body.]

ANNA: You're welcome.

OLAF: Now I'm perfect!

ANNA: [chuckles] Well, almost. [Reaches into a bag and takes out a carrot.]

OLAF: [To Kristoff] It was like my whole life got turned upside down. [Anna sticks the carrot too far into his face]

ANNA: Oh! Too hard. I'm sorry!

OLAF: Head rush!

ANNA: I was just... Are you okay?

OLAF: Are you kidding me? I am wonderful! I've always wanted a nose. So cute. (In a high-pitched voice) It's like a little baby unicorn. [Anna pushes the carrot farther out] (Back to his normal voice) But... Hey! Whoa! (He gasps) Oh. I love it even more. [He exhales] All right, let's start this thing over. Hi, everyone. I'm Olaf. And I like warm hugs. [Looks to Anna and opens arms as if inviting into a hug]

ANNA: Olaf? That's right, Olaf.

OLAF: And you are...

ANNA: Oh. Um... I'm Anna.

OLAF: [Looks at KRISTOFF and SVEN] And who's the funky looking donkey over there?

ANNA: That's Sven.

OLAF: Uh-huh. And who's the reindeer?

ANNA: Sven.

OLAF: Oh, they're... Oh. Okay. Makes things easier for me. [Sven tries to bite his nose, Olaf squeals] Aw, look at him trying to kiss my nose. (Baby talk) I like you, too.

ANNA: Olaf. Did Elsa build you?

OLAF: Yeah. Why? [Meanwhile, Kristoff takes his arm and starts to inspect it]

ANNA: Do you know where she is?

OLAF: Yeah. Why?

ANNA: Do you think you could show us the way?

OLAF: Yeah. Why?

KRISTOFF: [holding Olaf's arm] How does this work? [The arm slaps him] Ow!

OLAF: Stop it, Sven. [Takes back his arm and points Kristoff with it] I'm trying to focus, here. [Looks back at Anna] Yeah. Why?

KRISTOFF: I'll tell you why. We need Elsa to bring back summer.

OLAF: Summer?

ANNA: Mmm-hmm.

OLAF: Oh. [Clasps hands and moves around] I don't know why, but I've always loved the idea of summer. And sun, and all things hot.

KRISTOFF: Really? [Smirks and leans closer to Olaf] I'm guessing you don't have much experience with heat.

OLAF: [Stares at KRISTOFF for a second] Nope. But sometimes I like to close my eyes and imagine what it would be like when summer does come.

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## 2. Impaled

[50:53-51:45]

[KRISTOFF, ANNA, OLAF, and SVEN walk through snow and pointy ice shards while looking for ELSA]

KRISTOFF: So how exactly are you planning to stop this weather?

ANNA: Oh, I am gonna talk to my sister.

KRISTOFF: That's your plan? My ice business is riding on you talking to your sister?

ANNA: Yep.

KRISTOFF: [Grunts as he gets poked in the nose by an ice shard]. So, you're not at all afraid of her?

ANNA: Why would I be?

OLAF: Yeah. I bet she's the nicest, gentlest, warmest person ever. [He gets impaled through the chest as he speaks, and his lower body parts keep



walking. He looks down to his impaled chest and taps the ice]. Oh, look at that. I've been impaled. [He chuckles].

### 3. The Glass Castle

[53:08-55:12]

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[ANNA and OLAF walk up the steps to the ice palace. ANNA raises her fist and places it before the door. OLAF looks at her].

OLAF: Knock. [He waits as ANNA stays put]. Just knock. [He waits again and directs his gaze quickly to KRISTOFF]. Why isn't she knocking? [He shifts his head towards KRISTOFF] Do you think she knows how to knock?

ANNA: [Gasps as the doors to the castle open] It opened. That's a first. Oh. [Looks at OLAF and KRISTOFF] You should probably wait out here.

KRISTOFF: What?

ANNA: Last time I introduced her to a guy, she froze everything.

KRISTOFF: But, but... Oh, come on! [He gestures to the castle] It's a palace made of ice! Ice is my life!

OLAF: [Waves KRISTOFF goodbye] Bye, Sven!

ANNA: You, too, Olaf.

OLAF: Me?

ANNA: Just give us a minute.

OLAF: Okay. [Watches ANNA as she enters the castle. The doors close behind her] (Softly) One, two, three, [KRISTOFF joins him] four...

### **[Starts back at 54:50]**

ANNA: Actually, about that...

OLAF: Sixty! (In the background, not in shot)

ELSA: Wait. What is that?

OLAF: Hi! I'm Olaf and I like warm hugs!

ELSA: Olaf?

OLAF: [Stops at the foot of the staircase with ANNA] You built me. Remember that?

ELSA: And you're alive?

OLAF: [Looks down at his body and moves his hands] (Stammers) Um... I think so.

### 4. Escaping Marshmallow

[58:35-1:00:32]

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[ANNA throws a snowball at MARSHMALLOW. He roars]

KRISTOFF: See? Now you made him mad.

OLAF: [Dismembered and stuck to a rock] I'll distract him. You guys go. [ANNA and KRISTOFF leave. OLAF's lower body parts detach from the rock and also leave]. No, no, not you guys! [OLAF's head falls to the snow]. (Muffled) This just got a whole lot harder.

**[Starts back at 1:00:00]**

[KRISTOFF and ANNA have been running away from MARSHMALLOW and encounter a cliff. They decide to climb down with a rope to escape. They end up hanging from the rope after ANNA jumps hastily and the rope slides from the snow]

OLAF: [comes running dishevelled, body parts disorganised] (Panting) Man am I out of shape. (Gasps) [He reorders his body] There we go. Hey, Anna! Sven! Where did you guys go? [MARSHMALLOW appears from the trees] We totally lost Marshmallow back there. [MARSHMALLOW grunts, OLAF hears him, and he smiles] Hey! We were just talking about you. All good things, all good things. [MARSHMALLOW makes to attack. OLAF: [OLAF tries to grab hold of MARSHMALLOW's leg to stop him, but MARSHMALLOW keeps walking, unbothered]. This is not making much of a difference, is it? [MARSHMALLOW sends him flying away and OLAF falls down the cliff that ANNA and KRISTOFF are hanging from while they hold on to their rope].

ANNA: Olaf! [Makes to grab OLAF while he falls but misses him.]

OLAF: [Collides with the rocks and keeps plummeting down.] (Grunts) Hang in there, guys!

5. Meeting the trolls

[1:03:53-1:04:50]

KRISTOFF: KRISTOFF: Meet my family. [He turns around towards the rocks]. Hey, guys. [ANNA and OLAF stare wide-eyed and open-mouthed]

ANNA: They're rocks.

KRISTOFF: [To the rocks] You are a sight for sore eyes.

OLAF: [To ANNA] (Whispers) He's crazy.

KRISTOFF: [To the rocks] Rocko's looking sharp as usual. Clay, whoa... I don't even recognize you. You lost so much weight.

OLAF: [To ANNA] (Whispers) I'll distract him while you run. [He smiles] (In loud voice) Hi, Sven's family! [He taps a rock] (Speaking slowly and enunciating clearly) It's nice to meet you. (Whispers to ANNA) Because I love you, Anna,

I insist you run. (In loud voice) I understand you're love experts. Ooh! [To ANNA] (Whispers) Why aren't you running?

ANNA: Uh... Okay. Well, I'm gonna go.

OLAF: Go.

KRISTOFF: No, no, no. Anna, wait.

[The rocks start to move and turn into trolls. They assemble around KRISTOFF]

TROLL1: Kristoff's home! [They all scream excitedly]

TROLL1: Kristoff's here!

OLAF: Kristoff's home! [He lowers his arms and looks confusedly to the troll next to him] Wait, "Kristoff"?

TROLL1: Uh-huh.

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## 6. Saving Anna

[1:19:50-1:23:01]

[ANNA is lying on the floor, almost frozen to death after HANS leaves her to her doom. The doorknob rattles]

ANNA: (Whispers) Help. [The door opens and reveals a carrot stuck into the keyhole].

OLAF: (Giggles) [He grabs his nose and puts it back into his face] (Gasps) Anna! [He looks around to find a way to warm ANNA. He grabs a few logs and throws them in the fireplace. He accidentally also drops his arm] (Shrieks) [He grabs it back] [He lights a match]

ANNA: Olaf? [OLAF lights the fire]

OLAF: (Gasps)

ANNA: Olaf. Get away from there.

OLAF: [Astounded by the fire] Whoa... So, this is heat. I love it [He leans in to touch it and catches fire]. Oh! But don't touch it. [He goes to Anna and helps her reach the fire] So, where's Hans? What happened to your kiss?

ANNA: I was wrong about him. It wasn't true love.

OLAF: But we ran all the way here.

ANNA: Please, Olaf, you can't stay here. You'll melt.

OLAF: I'm not leaving here until we find some other act of true love to save you. [He sits down back-to-back with ANNA. Moves his feet.] Do you happen to have any ideas?

ANNA: I don't even know what love is.

OLAF: That's okay, I do. Love is putting someone else's needs before yours. Like, you know, how Kristoff brought you back here to Hans and left you forever.

ANNA: Kristoff loves me?

OLAF: Wow, so you really don't know anything about love, do you? [His nose starts to slide down as he starts to melt from the heat.]

ANNA: Olaf, you're melting.

OLAF: Some people are worth melting for. [He holds his face together as it melts]. Just maybe not right this second. [A gust of cold air opens the window] Don't worry, I've got it. [He runs to the window] (Screaming) We're gonna get through... (No longer screaming) Oh, wait [He lifts a finger to ANNA]. (With a calm tone) Hang on, I'm getting something. [He grabs the ice stalactite from the window and uses it as a spyglass]. (Gasps) (Screaming) It's Kristoff and Sven! They're coming back this way.

ANNA: They... They are?

OLAF: Wow, he's really moving fast. [still looking through the spyglass] I guess I was wrong. I guess Kristoff doesn't love you enough to leave you behind.

ANNA: Help me up, Olaf. Please.

OLAF: No, no, no! You need to stand by the fire and keep warm.

ANNA: I need to get to Kristoff.

OLAF: Why? [ANNA stares at him pointedly] (Gasps) Oh, I know why! There's your act of true love right there! Riding across the fjords like a valiant, pungent reindeer king! Come on!

**[Starts back at 1:22:40]**

[ANNA and OLAF decide to leave the castle through a window. OLAF pushes it open and almost falls]

OLAF: Whoa! (giggles) Slide, Anna! [She slides down. OLAF goes behind her and his lower body gets bigger from rolling down through the snow, like a snowball] We made it!